



part *Mant*

The Song of Roland.



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I
The Treachery of
Banelon



Charles the King, our great Emperor, has been for seven long years in Spain; he has conquered all the high land down to the sea; not a castle holds out against him, not a wall or city is left unshattered, save Saragossa, which stands high on a mountain. King Marsilie holds it, who loves not God, but serves Mahound, and worships Apollon; ill hap must in sooth besfall him. King Marsilie abides in Saragossa. And on a day he passes into the shade of his orchard; there he sits on a terrace of blue marble, and around him his men are gathered to the number of twenty thousand. He speake to his dukes and his counts, saying: 'Hear, lords, whate vil overwhelms us; Charles the Emperor of fair France has come into this land to confound us. I have no host to do battle against him, nor any folk to discomfert his. Counsel me, lords, as wise men and save me from death and shame.' But not a man has any word in answer, save Blancandrin of the castle of Val Fonde. Blancandrin was among the wifest of the paynims, a good knight of much prowess, discreet and valiant in the service of his lord. He saith to the King: 'Be not out of all comfort. Send to Charles the proud, the terrible, proffer of faithful service and goodly friendship; give him bears and lions and dogs, even hundred camels and a thousand falcons past the moulting time, four hundred mules laden with gold and silver, that he may send before him fifty full wains; and therewith shall he richly reward his followers. Long has he waged war in this land, it is meet he return again to Aix in France. And do thou pledge thy word to follow him at the feast of Saint Michael, to receive the

faith of the Christians, and to become his man in all honour & loyalty. If he would have hostages, send them to him, or ten or twenty, to make good the compact. We will send him the sons of our wives; yea, though it be to death, I will send mine own. Better it were that they lose their lives than that we be spoiled of lands and lordship, and be brought to beg our bread. By this my right hand,' saith Blancandrin, 'and by the beard that the wind blows about my breast, ye shall see the Frankish host straightway scatter abroad, and the Franks return again to their land of France. When each is in his own home, and Charles is in his chapel at Aix, he will hold high festival on the day of Saint Michael. The day will come, and the term appointed will pass, but of us he will have no word nor tidings. The King is proud and cruel of heart, he will let finite off the heads of our hostages, but better it is that they lose their lives than that we be spoiled of bright Spain, the fair, or suffer so great dose and sorrow.' And the paynims cry: 'Let it be as he saith.' So King Marsilie hath ended his counsel; he then called Clarin de Balaguer, Estramarijn, and Endropin, his fellow, and Priamon, and Barkan the Bearded, Machiner, and Maheu his uncle, Joiner, and Malbien from oversea, and Blancandrin; ten of the fiercest he hath called, to make known his will unto them. 'Lords, barons,' he saith, 'go ye to Charlemagne, who is at the siege of the city of Cordova, bearing olive branches in your hands in token of peace and submission. If by your wit ye can make me a covenant with Charles, I will give you great store of gold and silver, and lands and fiefs as much as ye may desire.' Nay,' say the paynims, 'of these things we have and to spare.' King Marsilie hath ended his council, & he saith to his men: 'Bo ye forth, lords, & bear in your hands

Marsilie takes counsel
against Charles

And sends to him ten
Ambassadors

branches of olive; bid Charles the King that he have mercy on me for the love of his God; say before this first month ends, I will follow him with a thousand of my true liege people, to receive the Christian faith and become his man in all love and truth. If he would have hostages, they shall of a sooth be given him.' Then said Blanchardin: 'We will make thee a fair covenant.' And King Marsilie let bring the ten white mules the which had been sent him by the King of Suaistic; their bridles are of gold and their saddles wrought of silver. They who are to do the King's message get them to mule back, bearing in their hands branches of olive. Anon thereafter they come before Charles, who holds France as his domain; and he cannot but be beguiled by them. The Emperor is jovous and glad at heart; he has taken Cordova and overthrown its walls; and with his mangonels he has beaten down its towers. Great was the poulder which fell to his knights in gold and silver and goodly armour. Not a heathen is left in the city; all are either slain or brought to Christianity. The Emperor is in a wide orchard, and with him are Roland, and Oliver, Samson the Duke, and Anfeis the Proud, Geoffrey of Anjou, the King's standard bearer, and thereto are Berin, and Berier, and with them is many another; the men of France are there to the number of fifteen thousand. Upon cloths of white silk sit these barons; and some there are who play at tables for their delight, but the old and wise play at chess, & the young lords practise the sword-play. Under a pine, beside an eglastine, stands a throne made all of beaten gold; there sits the King who rules sweet France; white is his beard and his head is hoary, his body is well fashioned & his countenance noble; those who seek him have no need to ask which is the King. And the messengers lighted down from their mules and saluted him in all love & friendship. Blanchardin was the first to speak, and said to the King: 'Greeting in the name of God the Glorious whom we should adore. Thus saith to you King Marsilie the valiant: much has he enquired into the faith which brings salvation; & now he would fain give you good store of his substance, bears and lions, & greyhounds in leash, seven hundred camels and a thousand falcons past the mounting time, four hundred mules laden with gold and silver, that ye may carry away fifty full wains of treasure; so many bezants of fine gold shall there be that well may ye reward your men of arms therewith. Long have you tarried in this land, it is meet that ye return again to Aix in France; there my lord will follow you, he gives you his word, and will receive the faith that you hold; with joined hands he will become your man, and will hold from you the kingdom of Spain.' At these words the Emperor stretches his two hands towards heaven, and then bows his head and begins to think. The Emperor sat with bowed head, for he was in no wise hasty of his words, but was ever wont to speak at his leisure.

The Franks rejoice over
the taking of Cordoba

The coming of the
Ambassadors

When again he raised his head, proud was his face, and he said to the messengers: 'Fairly have ye spoken. Yet King Marsilie is much mine enemy. By what token may I set my trust in the words that ye have said?' By hostages,' the Saracen made answer, 'of which you shall have or ten or fifteen or twenty. Though it be to death I will send mine own son, and you shall have others, methinks, of yet gentler birth. When you are in your kingly palace at the high feast of Saint Michael of the Peril, my lord will come to you, he gives you his word, and there in the springs that God made flow for you, he would be baptized a Christian.' 'Nea, even if he may be saved,' Charles made answer. Fair was the evening and bright the sun. Charles has set stable the ten mules, and in a wide orchard has let pitch a tent wherein the ten messengers are lodged. Twelve sergeants make them right good cheer; & there they abide the night through, till the clear dawn. The Emperor has risen early, and heard mass and matins; and now he sits under a pine tree, and summons his barons to advise him, for he would walk always by the counsel of those of France. The Emperor sits under the pine tree & summons his barons to council. Thither came Ogier, and Archibishop Trepin, Richard the Old, with Henry his nephew, and the brave Count Acclin of Gascony, Tedbald of Rhetins and Milon his cousin, and thereto Berin and Berier, and with them came Count Roland, and Oliver the brave, the gentle; of the Franks of France there are more than a thousand, and with the rest came Baneton who did the treason. And now begins the council that wrought so great woe. 'Lords, barons,' then saith Charles the Emperor, 'King Marsilie has sent me messengers: he would give me great store of his having, bears and lions and leashed greyhounds, seven hundred camels and a thousand mounted falcons, four hundred mules laden with gold of Arabia, more than enough to fill fifty wains; but thereto he charges me that I go back to France, giving his word to come to me at my abiding place at Aix, and there to receive our most holy faith, to become Christian, & to hold his marches of me; but I know not what may be in his heart.' 'We must bethink ourselves,' say the Franks in answer. Now when the Emperor had ceased from speaking, Count Roland, who is in no wise in accord with his words, stands forth and nay-says him. He saith to the King: 'It were ill done to set thy trust in Marsilie. It is seven full years since we came into Spain, and for you I have conquered Naples & Comillas, and I have taken Hastiera and the land of Pina, & Valague and Tudela and Segilia. Now King Marsilie was ever a traitor; aforesome he sent fifteen of his paynims, each bearing an olive branch, and they came unto you with a false tale. They advised with your Franks, who counselled you folly; and you sent two of your counts, Basan and Basil, unto the paynims, and thereafter, below Hasting, their heads were smitten off. Wherefore I counsel

carry on the war e vey as ye haue begun it, lead your assembled host unto Saragossa, lay siege to it, even though it be for all the days of your life, & revenge us for those whom the felons slew a foretime.' ¶ The Emperor sat with bent head, he stroked his beard and tugged at his moustache, nor answered he his nephew for either good or ill. The Franks are silent, all save Banelon, he rises and comes before Charles, and speaks right haughtily, saying to the King: 'It were ill done to hearken to a braggart, either me or any other, save that his counsel be to thine own profit. When King Marsilie lets tell thee he will do homage to thee as thy vassal, and will hold all Spain in fief of thee, and thereafter will receive the faith that we hold, he who counsels thee that thou reject this proffer, recks little, lord, of what death we die. The counsel of pride shouldest not prevail, let us leave folly and hold with the wise.' ¶ Thereafter Naymes stood forth—no better vassal was there in all the court—and thus bespoke the King: 'Thou hast heard the answer of Banelon the Count, and wise it is, and it be but heeded. King Marsilie is spent with war, thou hast taken his castles, and with thy man-gonels hast beaten down his walls, thou hast burned his cities and vanquished his men; when now that he entreates thy mercy, it were sin to press him further, the more that he wouldest give thee surety by hostages. Now send thou one of thy barons to him. This great war shouldest have an end.' The Duke hath spoken wisely,' cry the Franks. ¶ 'Lords, barons, what messenger shall we send to King Marsilie at Saragossa?' And Duke Naymes made answer: 'By thy leave I will go; give me now the glove and the staff.' But the King answered him: 'Nay, thou art a man of good counsel, and by this my beard thou shouldest not at this time go thus far from me. Sit thou again in thy place since none hath summoned thee.' ¶ 'Lords, barons, what messenger shall we send to the Saracen who holds Saragossa?' And Roland made answer: 'Right glad were I to go.' 'Nay certes, not you,' saith Count Oliver, 'for you are fierce and haughty of temper and I fear lest you fall a fighting. I will myself go, if the King so wills it.' 'Peace,' the King answered, 'nor you nor he shouldest go thither; and by my beard which thou seest whitened, nor one of the Twelve Peers shouldest be chosen.' The Franks answered not, and so, all are silent. ¶ Turpin of Rheims then stood forth from the rest and bespoke the King, saying: 'Let be thy Franks. Seven years hast thou been in this land, and much travail and woe hath been theirs. Give me, lord, the staff and the glove, & I will go to the Saracen of Spain, and learn what manner of man he is.' But wrathfully the King made answer: 'Sit thou again in thy place upon the white silk, and speak not, save as I command thee.' ¶ 'Ye knights of France,' then said Charles the Emperor, 'now choose me a baron of my marches who shouldest do my message to King Marsilie.' Then saith Roland: 'Let it be Banelon my stepfather.' 'Yea,' say the

Franks, 'well will he do your errand; if ye pass him by ye will send none so wise.' ¶ Then said the King: 'Banelon, come thou hither, and receive the glove & the staff. Thou hast heard thou art chosen of the Franks.' 'Sir,' Banelon answered him, 'it is Roland who has done this thing; never again shal I hold him in my love all the days of my life, nor yet Oliver in that he is his comrade, nor the Twelve Peers in that they hold him dear, and here in thy sight, lord, I despise them.' 'Thy wrath is over great,' then saith the King, 'and certes, go thou must in that I command thee.' 'Go I may, but without surely, none was there for Basil and Basan his brother. ¶ Well I know I needs must go unto Saragossa, but for him whos goes thither there is no return. And more than that, thy sister is my wife, & I have a son, Baldwin is he sight, never was there a fairer, and if he lives he will be a man of good prowess. To him I leave my lands and honours; guard him well, for never again shal I see him with these eyes.' 'Thou art too tender of heart,' Charles answered him, 'since I command thee, needs must thou go.' ¶ And Count Banelon was in sore wrath therat; he lets slip from about his neck his great cloak of sables, and stands forth in his tunic of silk. Beay blue are his eyes, and prond his face, well fashioned is he of body, & broad of chest. So comely he is, all his peers turn to look upon him. And he speaks to Roland, saying: 'Thou fool, why art thou in so great wrath? It is known of all that I am thy stepfather, and thou hast named me to go unto Marsilie. If God grants me to return again I shall bring woe upon thee so great it shall endure all the days of thy life.' 'Thou speakest pride & folly,' Roland answered him, 'and all men know I recknaught of threats. But a man of counsel shouldest bear this message, & if the King wills it, I am ready to go in thy stead.' ¶ 'Nay,' Banelon made answer, 'in my stead thou shouldest not go. Thou art not my man, nor am I thy overlord. Charles has commanded me that I do his errand, and I will go unto Marsilie in Saragossa. But rather shal I do there some folly than notease me of my great wrath.' At these words Roland falls a laughing. ¶ When Banelon sees that Roland derides him, so great anger is his he is near to bursting with wrath, & he wellnigh goes out of his senses. He saith to the Count: 'Little love have I for thee in that thou hast brought false judgment upon me. O just King, lo, I stand before thee, ready to do thy commandment.' ¶ The Emperor holds out to him his right glove, but fair had Count Banelon been elsewhere, and when he shouldest have taken it, he lets it fall to earth. And the Franks cry: 'God, what may this betide? Great woe shall come upon us from this embassage.' 'Lords,' saith Banelon, 'ye shall have tidings thereof.' ¶ And O King,' he saith again, 'I pray thy leave; since go I must, I would not delay.' 'Go in Jesus' name and in mine,' the King made answer. With his right hand he shroves and blessed him, and then he gave him the staff & the

*Roland quamic Banelon for
messenger*

Banelon rideth forth

Of the talk by the way

He cometh to Saragossa

letter. Now Banelon the Count gets him to his lodging and begins to don his armour, the goodliest he can find; he has fastened spurs of gold upon his feet, and at his side he has girt himself his sword; & when he mounted Tachebrun his steed, Bineimer his uncle it was, held his stirrup. Many a knight ye may see weep, and they say to him: 'Woe worth the day, baron! Long hast thou been in the King's court; and ever hast thou been accounted a man of worship. He who judged thee to go will be no wise shielded or saved by Charles; Count Roland ought the ver to have had thy thought, for ye twain are near of kin.' And they say further: 'Lord, we pray thee take us with thee.' But Banelon answers: 'No, so help me God! Better it were that I die alone than that so many good knights take their end. Ye will return again into sweet France, lords; greet ye my wife for me, and likewise wife Pinabel my friend and peer, and aid ye Baldwin my son, whom ye know, and make him your over-lord.' Therewith he set forth and rode on his way. As Banelon fares forth under the high o'rees he overtakes the Saracen messengers. They hold on their way & he follows behind, but anon Blan- candin falleth back besid him. Cunningly they speake one to another, 'A marvel of a man is this Charles,' saith Blan- candin, 'he has conquered Apulia and all Calabria; he has crossed the salt sea into England & has won tribute therefrom for the profit of Saint Peter; but what would he of us in our marches?' Quoth Banelon: 'Such is his will; & no man avail's to withstand him.' The Franks are goodly men,' then saith Blan- candin, 'but your dukes and counts do much hurt to their liege lord in so advising him; they will bring loss and discomfiture to him and to others.' But Banelon answers him saying: 'In sooth, I know no man save only Roland who shall be brought to shame thereby. On a day, as the Em- peror was seated under the shade of the trees, his nephew came to him, clad in his hauberk—for he was come from the taking of spoils below Carcas- sonne—& in his hand he held a scarlet apple: "Take it, fair sir," saith Roland to his uncle, "for even so I give over to thee the crowns of all the kings of the earth." Ofa surely, his great pride must undo him, for each day he runs in hazard of death; and if he be but slain we shall have quiet on the earth.' Then saith Blan- candin: 'Fell and cruel is this Roland who would make all peoples yield them, and claim all lands for his. But by means of what folk does he think to win thus much?' 'By the folk of France,' Banelon answers, 'for he is so beloved by them that they will never fail him; many a gift he gives them of gold and silver, mules and war horses, silk and armoue. And the Emperor likewise has all his de- fise; for him Roland will conquer all the lands from here even unto the East.' So Banelon and Blan- candin rode on till each had pledged other to do what he might to compass the death of Roland. So they rode by highways & bypaths till they alighted

under a yew tree in Saragossa. Hard by, under the shade of a pine tree, stood a throne covered over with silk of Alexandria; there sat the King who held all Spain, & around him were his Saracens to the number of twenty thousand; yet not one opened his lips or spoke a word, so eager were they for tidings; and now behold you, Blan- candin and Banelon. So Blan- candin came before Marsile; he held Count Banelon by the hand, and he spoke to the King, saying: 'Greeting in the name of Mahound and Apol- lon whose blessed law we hold. We did thy message to Charles, who lifted up both his hands towards heaven, and praised his God, nor made he other an- swer. But here he sends thee one of his barons, who is of France, and a mighty man, and from him thou shalt hear if thou art to have peace or war.' Saith Marsile: 'Now speak, for we listen.' Count Ban- elon had well bethought himself, and begins to speak with much cunning, as one who is skilful in words, saying to the King: 'Greeting in the name of God the Glorious whom we shoul'd adore. Thousaith to the Charles the mighty: if thou wilt receive Chris- tianity he will give thee the half of Spain in fee; the second halfe he will give unto Roland, in whom thou shalt find a haughty compeer. If thou wilt not ac- cept this covenant he will lay siege to Saragossa, & thou shalt be taken and bound by force, and brought unto the King's seat at Aix, & thou shalt be adjudged to end thy days, & there thou shalt die a vise & shaine- ful death.' At these words King Marsile was all astonished; in his hand he held a javelin tipped with gold, and with it he would have struck Banelon had his men not withheld him. King Marsile hath waxed red with wrath, and hath shaken the shaft of his javelin. When Banelon saw this, he laid a hand on his sword, and drew it forth from the sheath the length of two fingers, and spoke to it, saying: 'Most fair and bright thou art; long have I worn thee in the court of the King; and the Emperor of France shall never say I died here alone in a strange land, before the bravest had paid thee dear.' But the pay- nims cry: 'Let us stay this quarrel.' And the best of the Saracens so besought him, that Marsile again took his place on the throne. Saith the Caliph: 'Thou hast done ill towards us in thy desire to smite the Frank. Thou shouldest give ear and listen to him.' 'Sir,' then saith Banelon, 'I must endure it. But not for all the gold that God has made, nor for all the treasure of this land will I forego the word, so I be given leisure to say it, that Charleo the great King has sent by me to his worst foe.' Banelon wore a mantle of fables covered over with silk from Alex- andria, but now he lets it fall to the earth, & Blan- candin gathers it up; but from his sword he will not part, he hold it in his right hand by the golden pom- mel. And the paynims say one to another: 'Here is a goodly baron.' Banelon hath drawn near to the King, & saith: 'Thou art wrong to be wroth; Charles who rules all France let to the know that if thou wilt

receive the faith of the Christians, he will give thee half of Spain in fee; the other half shall go to Roland, his nephew, in whom thou wilt have a haughty compeer. If thou wilst not do according to this covenant, the King will lay siege to thee in Saragossa; by force thou shalt be taken and bound, and conveyed anon to Aix, the King's seat; neither war horse nor passeye shall thou have for the journey, nor yet a fesse mule or hemule mayst thou ride, but thou shalt be cast upon a wretched sumpter; and by a judgment at Aix thy head shall be smitten off. Our Emperor sends thee this letter,' and there with Banelon gave it into the right hand of the paynim. Marsilie has grown red with wrath; he breaks the seal and casts away the wax, he looks at the letter and sees the sum of it. 'Charles, who holds France in his power, bids me bethink me of his sorrow and wrath: that is to say of Basan, and Basil, his brother, whose heads I did set smite off in the hills below Haltisie. If I would ransom the life of my body I must send him the Caliph my uncle, other wise he will not hold me in his love.' Thereafter spoke Marsilie's son, and said to the King: 'Banelon hath uttered folly. Such words hath he said to thee it is unmeet that he live; give him over to me, and I will do justice upon him.' When Banelon hears him he brandishes his sword, and sets his back against the trunk of a pine tree. Now for council the King hath past into his orchard, and gathered his chieftain men about him; thither came Blaneandrin the hoary-headed, and Turfaleu, his son and heire, and the Caliph, Marsilie's uncle and saithful liegeman. Then saith Blaneandrin: 'Call hither the Frank, he has pledged me his faith to our welfare.' 'Do thou bring him,' saith the King. And Blaneandrin took Banelon by the right hand, and brought him into the orchard before the King. And therewithal they plotted the foul treason. Fair Sir Banelon, saith the King, 'I was guilty of some folly toward thee when I would have struck thee in my wrath. I give thee as a pledge these skins of sable, the border whereof is worth more than five hundred pounds. Before tomorrow at evening a fair amend shall be thine.' 'I will not refuse it,' Banelon answered him, 'and may it please God give thee good thanks.' Then quoth Marsilie: 'Banelon, in good faith I have it in my heart to love thee well. Tell me now of Charles magne. Methinks he is of great age and has outlived his time, for I deem him more than two hundred years old. Through many lands has he journed, and many a blow has he taken on his embossed shield, and many a mighty king has he brought low; when will he be weary of battle?' 'Nay, not such is Charles,' Banelon answered him; 'whosoever looks on the Emperor, or knows him, must account him a man of much prowess. I know not how to praise and glorify him to the full sum of his honour and bounty. Who can reckon his worth? and God has gifted him with such valour that rather had he die than give up his lordship.' Quoth the paynim: 'Much I marvel at this Charles

who is old and hoary; two hundred years and more he is, methinks. Through many lands has he travelled, and has taken many a thrust of lance and spear, and many a mighty king has he brought low; when will he be weary of battle?' 'That will never be,' saith Banelon, 'so long as his nephew is a living man, he hath not his fellow under the cope of heaven; and Oliver his comrade is of good prowess, and likewise the Twelve Peers whom Charles holds right dear; they, together with twenty thousand knights, make up the vanguard; and Charles is safe and unafraid.' Saith the paynim: 'Greatly I marvel at this Charles who is white-headed and hoary, methinks he is two hundred years and more. Through many lands has he ridden a conqueror, many a blow has he taken from good spears and sharp; when will he yield him in the strife?' 'That will never be,' quoth Banelon, 'so long as Roland is a living man, he hath not his like in courage from here even unto the East; and Oliver, his comrade, is right valiant, and the Twelve Peers whom Charles holds so dear, they, together with twenty thousand knights, make up the vanguard. Secure is Charles and fearless of no man living.' Fair Sir Banelon, thus saith King Marsilie, 'a fairer folk than mine ye shall not see; I have upon four hundred thousand knights, with them I may well do battle against Charles and his Franks.' 'Nay, not at this time,' Banelon answers him, 'or great will be the slaughter of thy paynims. Leave thou folly and seek after wisdom; give such store of thy substance unto the Emperor that there will be no Frank that does not marvel thereat; send him thereto twenty hostages, and the King will return again into fair France; but his rearguard he will leave behind him, and in it, of a surety, will be Count Roland, his nephew, and Oliver the valiant, the courteous; and both counts shall be slain, if thou wilt put thy trust in me. And the great pride of Charles shall come to its fall, and thenceforth he will have no desire to wage more war upon thee.' Fair Sir Banelon, then saith King Marsilie, 'how may I slay this Roland?' Quoth Banelon: 'Even that will I tell thee. The King will be at the main pass of Lize, and he will have set his rearguard behind him; in it will be the mighty Count Roland, his nephew, and Oliver, in whom he sets his trust, and in their company will be twenty thousand Franks. But do thou send against them one hundred thousand of thy paynims, and do them battle a first time, that the men of France may be smitten and sore hurt. Now mayhap, in this first tour, thine own may be slain with great slaughter, but do thou set upon the Franks a second time, with like array, that Roland may in no wise escape. And for thy part thou wilt have done a noble deed of arms, and thou shalt be untroubled by war all the days of thy life.' Whosoever may compass the death of Roland in that place will thereby smite off the right arm of Charles; his great armies will have an end, never again shall he call together such hosts, and the Great Land shall have

Marsilie would know of
Charles

Banelon offers counsel

peace.' When Marsilie heard this saying he kissed Banelon upon the neck; then he began to open his treasures. Quoth Marsilie: 'What need of more wordes? No comfet is good in which a man may not set his trust. Now do thou therefore swear me straight the treason that I shall find Roland in the rearguard.' 'Let it be as thou wilst,' said Banelon; and he swore the treason upon the reliques in his sword Gueglais, & therewith became a traitor. Hard by was a thronre wrought of ivory, and to it Marsilie set bring a book wherein was writ the law of Mahound and Tervagant, & upon it the Saracen of Spain swore that if he found Roland in the rearguard, he would set upon him with all his folk, and if that he might, forthwith slay him. 'Blessed be our covenant,' quoth Banelon. Thereupon came thither a paynim called Baldasbrun, who aforetime had stood godfather to King Marsilie; fair & laughing, he said to Banelon: 'Take thou my sword, no man weareth a better, & between the guarda thereof are more than a thousand man-gons. I give it thee, fair sir, in all friendship, but do thou aid us against Roland the baron, and take heed that we find him in the rearguard.' 'So shall it be,' quoth Count Banelon; and each kissed other on the cheek & the chin. Thereafter came thither a paynim hight Climboring, frank and free, he said to Banelon: 'Take thou my helme, a better was never seen, but do thou help us against Roland, lord of the marches, in such wise that we may bring him to shame.' 'Even so will I do,' saith Banelon; and each kissed other on the cheek & the mouth. Then thither came Beauris monde the Queen, and saith to the Count: 'Sir, thou art right dear to me, in that thou art beloved of my lord and all his men. To thy wife I wouldest send these two bracelets, well seen are they with jacinths and gold and amethysts, and they are of a greater price than all the riches of Rome, thy Emperor hath none so goodly.' And Banelon takes the bracelets and bestowes them in his boote. Then the King calls Mardonius his treasurer, saying: 'Hast thou made ready the gifts for Charles?' 'Yea, lord,' he answers, 'all is ready, — seven hundred canels laden with gold & silver, & twenty hostages, the noblest under heaven.' Marsilie lays a hand on Banelon's shoulder and speaks to him, saying: 'A goodly baron and wise thou art, but by that faith thou deemest most holy, have a heed that thou turn not thy heart from me; and I will give thee great store of my substance, ten miles laden with the finest gold of Arabia; and each year thou shalt have a like gift. Now taketh thou the keys of this great city, and convey thou to Charles the rich gifts, and give over to him from me the twenty hostages; but thereafter have a care the rearguard be adjudged to Roland. And sobeit I may come upon him in past or desile, I will do him battle to the death.' 'methinks Itarry too long,' saith Banelon in answer; & therewith he mounts his horse & rides on his way. Meantime the Emperor has turned back towards his own land, & has come to the city of Valtierra, which afores-

time Count Roland had taken, and so destroyed that thenceforward for the space of a hundred years it was waste and desolate. There the King a waits tidings of Banelon, & the tribute of the great land of Spain. And now on a morning, at dawn, with the first light, comes Banelon into the camp. The Emperor had risen early and heard mass and matins; and now he is on the green grass before his tent, and with him is Roland, and Oliver the valiant, Naynes the Duke & many another. Thither comes Banelon, the felon, the traitor, and with cunning falsehood speaketh to the King, saying: 'Blessed be thou of God! I bring thee hereby the keys of Saragossa, & great store of gifts, and twenty hostages—guard thou them well. But King Marsilie bids thee blame him not that the Caliph be not among them; with mine own eyes I saw him and four hundred men of arms, clad in hauberke, with helms on head, & girt with swords whose hilts were inlaid with gold, embark together upon the sea. They were fleeing from Christianity which they would not receive or hold. But before they had sailed four leagues, storm and tempest fell upon them, and even there they were drowned, never shall ye see them more. Had the Caliph been alive I had brought him hither. As for the paynim King, in very truth, lord, this month shall not pass but he will come to thee in thy kingdom of France, & will receive the faith that thou holdest, and will join his hands in thine and become thy man, and will hold of thee his kingdom of Spain.' Then saith the King: 'Thanks be to God therefor. Well hast thou done, and great shall be thy reward.' Thereafter he let sound a thousand trumpets throughout the host, & the Franks break up their camp, and load their sumpters, and set forth together towards fair France. Charles the Great has laid waste all Spain, he has taken its castles and sacked its cities. But now the war is ended, so saith the King, and he rides ontowards fair France. The day passes and evening falls; Count Roland has set the King's standard on the crest of a hill against the sky; and the Franks pitch their tents in all the country round about. Meantime the paynims ride on through the wide valleys, clad in their hauberke & two-fold harness, helms on head, and girt with their swords, shields on shoulder, and lances in hand. They made stay in a wood, on the top of the mountains, & there four hundred thousand await the dawn. God, what sorrow the Franks know it not. The day fades & night darkens; Charles, the great Emperor, sleeps. He dreamed that he was come to the great pass of Cizre, and it seemed to him that he held the ashen shaft of his lance in his hand, but Banelon the Count snatched it from him, brandished and broke it, that its pieces flew towards heaven. But still Charles sleeps & does not waken. Thereafter he dreamed another dream; that he was before his chapel at Aix & a bear bit him in his right arm cruelly; & anon, from towards Adenene, he saw come a leopard which fiercely assaulted him; but even then, from within

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the hall, a greyhound sprang out, and ran leaping to Charles; first he snapped off the right ear of the bear, then wrathfully he set upon the leopard; & the Franks cried that it was a great battle. Yet Charles knew not which of the twain shoul'd conquer; and still he sleeps & doth not waken. Night passes & the clear dawn shineth forth, proudly the Emperor gets to horse, and lets sound the trumpets aloud throughout the host. 'Lords, barons,' then saith Charles, 'nigh at hand is the pass and the strait defiles, now choose ye who shal be in the rearguard.' And Baneton answered: 'Let it be Roland, my stepson, thou hast no baron so brave as he.' Now when the King hears him, he looks at him haughtily, saying: 'Thou art a very devil; and a mortal anger has entered into thee.'

And who shall go before me in the vanguard?' And Baneton answered him: 'Let it be Ogier of Denmark, no baron hast thou more apt thereto.' When Count Roland hears that he is chosen, he speaks out knightly wise, saying: 'Sir kinsman, I shoul'd hold thee right dear in that thou hast adjudged the rearguard to me; and methinketh Charles the King shal lose naught thereby, neither palfrey nor war-horse, nor any he/mule or she/mule whereon man may ride, nay, not so much as a pack-horse or sumpter, and if it be not first well paid for by the sword.' 'Yea, thou speakest truly,' saith Baneton, 'that I know well.' And Count Roland turns to Charles, saying: 'Bro me now the bow that you bear in your hand; verily, you shall have no need to chide me that I let it fall, as did Baneton your right glove when you gave him the herald's staff.' But still the Emperor sits with bent head; he plucks at his beard & strokes his moustache, and he may not help but weep. Thereafter Naymes came before him, a better vassal was not in all the court, and he spoke to the King, saying: 'Well hast thou heard, Count Roland is all in wrath; but the rear guard is adjudged to him, and thou hast no baron who would dare supplant him therein. Give him therefore the bow that you hold, and take heed that he hath good aid.' The King holds out the bow and Roland receives it. And the Emperor speaks to Roland, saying: 'Fair sir nephew, know for sooth that I will give over unto thee the half of my army, keep them with thee that they may be thy safeguard.' 'Nay, not so will I,' saith the Count. 'May God con found me if I belie my house. I will keep with me twenty thousand Franks of good valour; and do thou cross the mountains in all surety, for so long as I live thou needst fear no man.' Count Roland has mounted his horse; and Oliver his comrade came to

stand over against him, and thither came Berin and the brave Count Berier, and Oton, and Bevengier, and thereto came Hamson, and Anseis the Proud, Iron and Ivorie whom the King holds full dear; and after them came Berard the Old of Rousillon, and thereto Engelier the Bascon. Then said the Archibishop: 'By my head, I too will go.' 'And I with thee,' quoth Count Quaster, 'I am Roland's man and to follow him is my devoir.' Then among them they choose out twenty thousand knights. Thereafter Count Roland calls Quaster del Hum, saying: 'Take thou one thousand Franks of our land of France, and hold the hills & defiles that the Emperor may lose none of his own.' 'It is my part to do this for thee,' saith Quaster. ♦♦♦♦♦

The twelve Peers abide in Spain



And with a thousand Franks of France he holdeth the hills & the passes, nor will he leave the heights for any ill tidings before seven hundred swords have been drawn. Now the same day King Almarius of

the kingdom of Belferne shal do him and his men fierce battle. High are the hills and dark the valleys, brown are the rocks and dread the defiles. That day the main host of the Franks pass with toil and travail, & fifteen leagues away men might hear the noise of their march. But when that they draw near to the Great Land, and see Bascony, their lord's domain, they call to mind their own sieges & havings, their young maidens & gentle wives, till there is not one that does not weep for pity. More than all the rest is Charles heavy of heart, in that he has left his nephew in the passes of Spain; pity takes him, & he cannot help but weep. The Twelve Peers abide in Spain, & in their fellowship are twenty thousand Franks who know not fear or any dread of death. But the Emperor as he draws near to France, hides his face in his mantle. Beside him rides Duke Naymes and he speaks to the King, saying: 'Why makest thou such sorrow?' 'Yedo ill to askit,' Charles answers him; 'such grief is mine I cannot help but make lament. I fear lest through Baneton France shall be destroyed. This past night, by means of an angel, a dream came to me, and it seemed to me that Baneton shattered to bits the lance I held in my hand; and he it was who adjudged the rearguard to Roland. And now him I have left behind in a strange land. God, if I lose him never shall I find his fellow.' Charles the Great cannot help but weep; and a hundred thousand Franks are full of pity for him, and a marvellous fear for Roland. Baneton the felon has done this treason; and rich are the gifts he has received thereto from the paynim king, gold &

Charles fears for Roland

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silver, silkis and cestons, mules & horses, & camels and lions. Meantime King Marsilie calls together the barons of Spain, counts, and viscounts, dukes, & armagars, and emirs, and sons of counts; four hundred thousand has he gathered together in three days. He lets sound his tabours throughout Saragossa; & on the topmost tower the paynims raise an image of Mahound, and there is not a man but offers prayers to it and worships it. Thereafter they ride through the land of Cerdagne, over hill & through dale, each seeking to outdo other, till they see the gonfanons of the men of France, the rearguard of the Twelve Peers; they will not fail to do them battle. Then from his fellows cometh Marsilie's nephew, riding a mule the which he urges on with a staff; frank and free he saith to his uncle: 'Fair Sir King, well have I served thee and much travail & hardship has been minethereby; for thee have I done battle many a time and for thee have I conquered, and now in return I would fain have a gift—the death blow of Roland. Slay him I will with the point of my lance, and if Mahound will help me; and thereby will I set free all the parts of Spain, from the passes of Aspre even unto Durestant. Charles will grow weary, and his Franks will yield them; and thou shalt have peace all the days of thy life.' And in answer King Marsilie gives him his glove. Holding the glove in his hand, the nephew of Marsilie speaks to his uncle right proudly, saying: 'Fair Sir King, this is a goodly gift thou hast given me. Now choose from eleven of thy barons, that I may do battle with the Twelve Peers.' The first to answer him was Falseron, the brother of King Marsilie: 'Fair Sir nephew, I will go with thee; together, in good sooth, we will do this battle; and for the rearguard of the great army of Charles, certes, we shall slay them.' Then forth stands King Corsablis, he is of Barbary & a man of wiles; & now he speake out like a knight of good courage, for not for all God's gold would he do cowardly. And before hold Halprimis de Brigal comes hastening up, swifter than horse can gallop he speeds on foot, and before Marsilie he cries in a loud voice: 'I will go into Roncevals, and if I find Roland I will slay him with my own hand.' An Emir there is of Valaguer, well-fashioned is he of body, and fair and proud of face; & mounted on his horse he rejoices in the bearing of arms; well famed is he for his courage, & had he but Christianity he were a goodly baron. He now comes before Marsilie and cries: 'I would go into Roncevals, and if I find Roland he shall die the death, and thereto shall Oliver and all the Twelve Peers, and the Franks shall die in dolour and shame. Charles the Great is old and in his dotage, he will weary of waging strong war upon us, and Spain shall rest in peace.' And therefore King Marsilie gives him good thanks. Among the paynims is an Almager of Goriane, there is none more fell in all the land of Spain. He likewise has made his boast before Marsilie: 'Into Roncevals I will lead my men, to the number

of twenty thousand, all armed with shieds & lances. And if I find Roland I pledge me to slay him, never will the day dawn when Charles shall not lament him.' Then stands forth Turgis of Tortosa, Count he is, and lord of the aforesaid city, & he would slay the Christians with a great slaughter. Beside the others he takes his place before Marsilie, saying to the King: 'Be not afraid. Mahound is mightier than Saint Peter of Rome, serve ye him & we shall have victory in the field; at Roncevals I will seek out Roland, and no man shall save him from death. Lo, here is my sword, long it is and goodly, & I will measure it against Durendal, and ye shall hear which of the twain rails most in the fight. The Franks shall die or yield them to us, & thereby shall Charles the Old be brought to dolour and shame; nevermore shall he wear cro wounhead.' Hard by is Esterenis of Valtierra, a Saracen is he, and lord of that land; & now from amid the press about Marsilie he cries: 'I will go into Roncevals and bring to naught the proud; if I find Roland he shall not bear thence his head, nor shall Oliver the captain; and for the Twelve Peers, they are doomed; the Franks shall perish, & France shall be made desolate, & of goodly vassals Charles shall be despoiled.' Hard by is a paynim knight Esturgant, and with him is Estramoris, his comrade, felon both and misbelieving traitors. Then Marsilie called, saying: 'Come hither, lords, I would that ye twain go into the passes of Roncevals, and there help to array my folk.' And they make him answer, saying: 'Lord, even as thou commandest so will we do. And we will set upon Roland and Oliver, and the Twelve Peers shall have no safety from death, for our swords are sharp and goodly, & we will turn them bright red with warm blood. The Franks shall die, and Charles shall be sore stricken. And as a gift we will give thee the Great Land; come thither, lord, & thou shalt see these things in very sooth; yea, & the Emperor himself we will give over unto thee.' Now thither comes hastening Magaris of Sibific, he who holds all the land down to the sea. Well loved is he of ladies by reason of his fairness, & no woman can set eyes upon him but her face brightens, & will she, nill she, she must laugh for very joy of him. And of his prowess he has no fellow among the paynims. He now presses through the throng, crying above all the rest to the King: 'Be ye no whit adread. I will go into Roncevals & there slay Roland, nor shall Oliver go thence a living man, and the Twelve Peers abide there but for their death. Lo, here is my sword hilted with gold, the Admiral of Primes it was gave it me, and I pledge my faith it shall seek and find the red blood. The Franks shall perish and France be brought to shame. Never shall the day dawn when Charles the Old of the white beard shall not suffer dolour and wrath thereby. Within the year we shall have taken France, and thou mayst lie in the borg of Saint Denis.' And at his words the paynim King bows low. Hard by is Chernubile of the Black

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valley. His long hair falls even unto the ground; & in jest, for his disport, he can bear a greater burden than can be laid upon seven mules. The land wherein he dwells filleth men with fear; there the sun doth not shine nor can the corn ripen, no rain falls, neither does the dew gather upon the earth; all black are the rocks of that land, & some say it is the abode of devils. And now Chernubile speaks, saying: 'I have girt on my good sword, and at Roncevales I will dye it red; if on my path I meet with Roland the valiant, never believe me more if I do not set upon him in battle, & with my own sword I will conquer Durendal. The Franks shall perish, and France shall be destroyed.' And when he had spoken the Twelve Peers gathered together, and with them went a hundred thousand Saracens; keen and eager for battle were they all, and in a fir wood, hard by, they did on their harness. ¶ The paynims arm themselves with Saracen hauberks, of which the more part are of threefold thickness; they lace on helms of right good Saracen work, and gird on swords of Viennoise steel; fair are their shields, & their lances are of Valencia, tipped with gonsanons white and blue and scarlet. They leave behind them the mules & palfries, and mounting their war-horses, ride forth in close ranks. Fair was the day and bright the sun, and all their harness glistened in the light. And for the more joy they let sound a thousand trumpets; so great is the noise thereof that the Franks hear it. Then saith Oliver: 'Sir comrade, methinks we shall have ado with the Saracens.' 'Now God grant it be as thou sayest,' Roland answers him, 'for to make stand here for our King is to do as good men ought to do. Verily for his liege a man well ought to suffer pain and woe, and endure both great heat and great cold, and should hold him ready to lose both hide and hair in his lord's service. Now let each have a care that he strikes good blows and great, that no man may mis-say us in his songs. These misbelieving men are in the wrong, and right is with the Christians, and for my part I will give ye no ill example.'

LX. The Battle at Roncevales.

Oliver goes up into a high mountain, and looks away to the right, all down a grassy valley, & sees the host of the heathen coming on, & he called to Roland, his comrade, saying: 'From the side of Spain I see a great sight coming, thousands of white hauberks and thousands of gleaming helms. They will fall upon our Franks with great wrath. Beware the felon has done this treason, & heit was adjudged us to the rear-guard, before the Emperor.' 'Peace, Oliver,' saith Count Roland, 'he is my mother's husband, speak thou no ill of him.' Oliver has fared up the mountain, & from the summit thereof he sees all the kingdom of Spain and the great host of the Saracens. Wondrous is the shire of helmets studded with gold, of shields

and brodered hauberks, of lances & gonsanons. The battles are without number, and no man may give count thereof, so great is the multitude. Oliver was all astonied at the sight; he got him down the hill as best he might, and came to the Franks, and gave them his tidings. ¶ 'I have seen the paynims,' said Oliver, 'never was so great a multitude seen of living men. Those of the vanguard are upon a hundred thousand, all armed with shields & helmets, & clad in white hauberks; right straight are the shafts of their lances, & bright the points thereof. Such a battle we shall have as was never before seen of man. Ye lords of France, may God give you might; and stand ye firm that we be not overcome.' 'Foul salt him who flees!' then say the Franks, 'for no peril of death will we faint thee.'

¶ Great is the host of the heathen,' saith Oliver, 'and few is our fellowship. Roland, comrade, I pray thee sound thy horn of ivory that Charles may hear it and return again with all his host.' 'That were but folly,' quoth Roland, 'and thereby would I lose all fame in sweet France. Rather will I strike good blows & great with Durendal, that the blade thereof shall be blooded even unto the hilt. Woe worth the paynims that they came into these passes! I pledge thee my faith short life shall be theirs.' ¶ 'Roland, comrade, blow now thy horn of ivory, and Charles shall hear it, and bring hither his army again, & the King & his barons shall succour us.' But Roland answers him, saying: 'Now God forsend that through me my kinsman be brought to shame, or aught of dishonour beset fair France. But first I will lay on with Durendal, the good sword that is girded here at my side, & thou shalt see the blade thereof all reddened. Woe worth the paynims when they gathered their hosts! I pledge me they shall all be given over to death.'

¶ Roland, comrade, blow thy horn of ivory, that Charles may hear it as he passes the mountains, and I pledge me the Franks will return hither again.'

But Roland saith: 'Now God forsend it be said of any living man that I sounded my horn for dread of paynims. Nay, that reproach shall never fall upon my kindest. But when I am in the stout I will smite seven hundred blows, or mayhap a thousand, & thou shalt see the blade of Durendal all crimson. The Franks are goodly men, and they will lay on right valiantly, nor shall those of Spain have any surety from death.'

¶ Saith Oliver, 'I see no shame herein. I have seen the Saracens of Spain, they cover the hills and the valleys, the heaths & the plains. Great are the hosts of this hostile folk, & ours is but a little fellowship.' And Roland makes answer: 'My desire is the greater thereby. May God and his most holy angels forsend that France should lose aught of worship through me. Lieser had I die than bring dishonour upon me. The Emperor loves us for dealing stout blows.'

¶ Roland is brave, & Oliver is wise, and both are good men of their hands; once armed & a horseback, rather would they die than flee the battle. Hardy are the Counts & high their speech. The felon paynims ride

Oliver prays Roland to sound his horn

The pride of Roland

on in great wrath. Saith Oliver: 'Roland, prithhee loo. They are close upon us, but Charles is afar off. Thou wouldest not deign to sound thy horn of ivory; but were the King here we shold suffer no hurt. Look up towards the passes of Aspre and thou shalt see the woeis rearngard; they who are o'sit will do no more service henceforth.' But Roland answers him: 'Speak not so basely. Cursed be the heart that turens coward in the breast! Hold we the field, and ours be the bussets and the slaughter.' When Roland sees that the battle is close upon them he wayes fiercer than lion or leopard. He calls to the Franks, & he saith to Oliver: 'Comrade, friend, say not so. When the Emperor left us his Franks he set apart such a twenty thousand of men that, certes, among them is no coward. For his liege lord a man ought to suffer all hardship, and endure great heat and great cold, and give both his blood and his body. Lay on with thy lance, and I will smite with Durandal, my good sword that the King gave me. If I die here, may he to whom it shall fall, say, "This was the sword of godly valsal."' Nigh at hand is Archbisshop Turpin; he now spurs his horse to the crest of a knoll, & speaks to the Franks, & this is his sermon: 'Lords, barons, Charles lest us here, & it is a man's devoir to die for his King. Now help ye to uphold Christianity. Certes, ye shall have a battle, for here before you are the Saracens. Confesse your sins and pray God's mercy, & that your souls may be saved I will absolve you. If ye are slain ye will be holy martyrs, and ye shall have seats in the higher Paradise.' The Franks light off their horses and kneel down, and the Archbisshop blesses them, & for a penance bids them that they lay on with their swords. The Franks get upon their seat, sted & absolved from sin; and in the name of God the Archbisshop makes over them the sign of the cross. Then they mounted their swift horses, arm'd themselves after the manner of knights, and made them ready for battle. Count Roland calls to Oliver, saying: 'Sir comrade, rightly thou saidst Banelon hath betrayed us all, and hath received gold and silver and goods therefor; but the Emperor will well revenge us. King Marsile hath bought & sold us, but he shall pay for it with the sword.' Roland rides through the passes of Spain on Deillantis, his good horse and swift. He is clad in his harness, right well it becomes him, and as he rides he brandishes his spear, turning its point towards heaven; and to its top is bound a gonfanon of pure white, whereof the golden strings fall down even unto his hands. Well fashioned is his body, and his face fair and laughing; close behind him rides his comrade; & all the Franks claim him as their champion. Full haughtily he looks on the Saracens, but gently & mildly on the Franks, & he speaks to them courteously, saying: 'Lords, barons, ride on softly. The paynims come seeking destruction, and this day we shall have plunder so godly & great that no King of France hath ever taken any of so great price.' At these words the two hosts come together. Saith

Roland is fain for battle

The Archbisshop's sermon

Oliver: 'I have no mind for more words. Thou wouldest not deign to sound thy horn of ivory, and no help shalt thou get from Charles, naught he knows of our case, nor is the wrong his, the baron. They who are beyond the mountaints are no wise to blame. Now ride on with what might ye may. Lords, barons, hold ye the field! And in God's name I pray you bethink you both how to deal good blows and how to take them. And let us not forget the device of our King.' At these words all the Franks cried out together, and whosoever may have heard that cry of Monjoie must call to mind valour and worth. Then they rode forward, God! how proudly, spurring their horses for the more speed, and self assenting—how else shold they do? But no whit adread were the Saracens. And so you, Franks and paynims come together in battle. The nephew of Marsile, who was called Aelroth, rides before all his host, & sonk are his words to our Franks: 'Ye Frankish felons, to-day ye shall do battle with us. He who shond have been yore surety has betrayed yon; mad is the King who left you behind in the passes. To-day shall fair France lose her fame, and the right arm of Charles shall be smitten off from his body.' When Roland hears this, God! how great is his wrath. He spurs as fast as his horse may run, and with all the might he hath he smites Aelroth, and breaks his shield, and rends apart his hanberk, that he cleaves his breast and breaks the bone, and severs the spine from the back; with his lance he drives out the soul from the body, for so fierce is the blow Aelroth wavered, and with all the force of his lance Roland hurls him from his horse dead, his neck broken in two parts. Yet Roland still chides him, saying: 'Out coward! Charles is not mad, nor loves he treason. He did well and knightly to leave us in the passes. To-day shall fair France lose naught of her fame. Franks, lay on! Ours is the first blow. Right is with us, and these swine are in the wrong.' Among the paynims is a Duke, Falsaron by name, who was brother to King Marsile, and held the land of Dathan and Abiram; there is no more shameless felon on all the earth; so wide is his forehead that the space between his eyes measure a full half foot. When he sees his nephew slain, he is full of dole, & he drives through the press as swift as he may, and cries aloud the paynim war-cry. Great is his hatred of the Franks. To-day shall fair France lose her fame! Oliver hears him and is passing wroth; with his golden spurs he pricks on his horse and rides upon him like a true baron; he breaks the shield, tears asunder the hanberk, and drives his lance into the body up to the loops of his pennon, and with the might of his blow hurls him dead from the saddle. He lookes to earth where lies the felon, and speake him haughtily: 'Coward, naught care I for thy threats. Lay on, Franks, for certes, we shall over come them.' And he cries out Monjoie, the war-cry of Charles. A King there is, Corsablis by name; he is of Barbary, a far off land, & he spoke to the Saracens

XIII

cens, saying: 'We shall win a fair day on these Franks, for few is their fellowship. And such as be here must we hold of small worth, nor shall one be saved alive for Charles; the day has come whereon they must die.' Archbishop Turpin hears him right well, and to no man under heaven has he ever borne such hate; with his spurs of fine gold he pricks on his horse, and rides upon the King with great might, cleaves his shield & rends his hauberk, and thrusts his great lance into his body, and so drives home the blow that sorely the King wavers, & with all the force of his lance Turpin hurls him dead into the path. He looks on the ground where he sees the glutton lie, nor doth he wish hold him from speech, but saith: 'Coward & heathen, thou hast lied! Charles, my liege lord, is ever our surety, and our Franks have no mind to flee; and we shall have a care that thy comrades go not far hence; yea, and a second death must ye suffer. Lay on ye Franks, let no man forget himself! This first blow is ours, thanks be to God.' And he cries out Monjoie, to hold the field. And Berin smites Malprimitus de Brigal, that his good shield no whit availeth him, he shatters the jewelled boss thereof, & half of it falls to earth; he pierces the hauberk to the flesh, & drives his good lance into the body. The paynim falls down in a heap, & his soul is carried away by Satan. And Berier, the comrade of Berin, smites the Emir, and shatters his shield and unmais his hauberk, and thrusts his good lance into his bowels; so great is the blow his lance drives through the body, and with all the force of his shaft he throws him to the ground dead. 'Ours is a goodly battle,' quoth Oliver. Samson the Duke rides upon the Almazar, and breaks his shield all flowered & set with gold, nor doth his good hauberk give him any surety, but Samson pierces him through heart and liver and lungs, & sells him dead, whether any one grieves for him or no. Saith the Archbishop: 'That was knightly stricken.' And Anseis urges on his horse and encounters with Turgis of Tortosa, cleaves his shield below the golden boss, rends asunder his twosold hauberk, and sets the point of his good lance in his body, & thrusts so well that the iron passes sheer through him, that the might of the blow hurls him to the ground dead. 'That was the buffet of a man of good prowess,' saith Roland. And Engesier, the Baston of Bordeury, spurs his horse, slackens his rein, and encounters with Essemis of Hastinga, breaks and carves the shield from his shoulder, rends apart the ventail of his hauberk, and smites him in his breast between his two collar bones, and with the might of the blow hurls him from the saddle, saying: 'Ye are all given over to destruction.' And Oton smites the paynim Esturgant upon the leatheren front of his shield, marring all the blue & white thereof, breaks through the sides of his hauberk, and drives his good spear & sharp into his body, and casts him from his swift horse, dead; whereat he crieth out to him: 'Naught may save thee.' And Berengier rides on Estramoris, shatters his shield,

rends asunder his hauberk, and drives his stout lance into his body, and smites him dead amid a thousand Saracens. Of the Twelve Peers ten are now slain and but two are still living men, to wit, Chernuble and Count Margaris. Margaris is a right valiant knight, strong and goodly, swift and keen; he spurs his horse and rides on Oliver, breaks his shield below the boss of pure gold, that the lance past along his side, but by God's help, it did not pierce the body; the shaft grazes him but doth not overthrow him, & Margaris drives on, in that he has no hindrance, and sounds his horn to call his men about him. Now the battle waveth passing great on both parties. Count Roland spares himself no whit, but smites with his lance as long as the shaft holds, but by fifteen blows it is broken and lost; thereupon he draws out Durendal his good sword, all naked, spurs his horse & rides on Chernuble, breaks his helmet whereon the carbuncles blaze, cleaves his mail-coif and the hair of his head that the sword cuts through eyes and face, and the white hauberk of fine mail, and all the body to the fork of the legs, sheer into the saddle of beaten gold, nor did the sword stint till it had entered the horse & cleaveth the backbone, never staying for joint, that man and horse fell dead upon the thick grass. Thereupon Roland cried: 'Coward, woe worth the day thou camest hither! no help shalt thou get from Mahound; nor by such swine as thou hast to day's battle be achieved.' Count Roland rides through the press; in his hand he hath Durendal, right good for hacking and hewing, and doth great damage upon the Saracens. So, how he hurls one dead upon another, and the bright blood flows out on the field. All reddened are his hauberk and his arms, and the neck and shoulders of his good horse. Nor doth Oliver hold back from the battle; the Twelve Peers do not shame themselves, and all the Franks smite and slay, that the paynims perish or fall swooning. Then saith the Archbishop, 'Our barons do passing well,' & he cries out Monjoie, the war-cry of Charles. Oliver drives through the stour; his lance is broken and naught is left him but the truncheon; yet he smites the paynim Massaron that his shield patterned with gold and flowers is broken, and his two eyes fly out from his head, and his brains fall at his feet; among seven hundred of his fellows Oliver smites him dead. Then he slew Turgin and Esturgant, and thereby broke his lance that it splintered up to his very hand. Thereat Roland saith: 'Comrade, what dost thou? I have no mind for a staff in so great battle, rather a man hath need of iron and steel. Where is Halteclere thy sword, with its hilt of gold and its pommel of crystal?' I may not draw it,' Oliver answered him. 'So keen am I to smite.' But now the lord Oliver hath drawn his good sword, even as his comrade had besought him, and hath shown it to him in knightly wise and therewith he smites the paynim Justinde Val Ferré that he severs his head in twain, cuts through his broadered hauberk and his body, through his good saddle

The Franks do passing well

The battle waxes hard

set with gold, and severs the backbone of his steed, that man and horse fall dead on the field before him. Then said Roland: 'Now I hold you as my brother, and tis for such buffets the Emperor loves us.' And on all sides they cry out Monjoie. Count Berin rides his horse Sorel, and Berier, his comrade, rides Passerel; both slacken rein, and spurring mighty set upon the paynims Timosel; one smites him on the shield, and the other on the hauberk, that both their lances break in his body; & they cast him down dead in the fallow field. I wot not, nor have I ever heard man say, which of the twain was the more swift. Then Esperveris, son of Borel, died at the hand of Engesier of Bordeamy. And the Archibishop slew Sigfroel, that enchanter who of old had passed down into hell, led thither by the spells of Jupiter. 'This man had done us soul wrong,' quoth Tempin. And Roland answered him: 'Vanquished now is the felon, Oliver, my brother, such buffets please me right well.' Meantime the battle waxes passing hard, & both Franks & paynims deal such blowe that it is wonder to see; here they smite, and there make what defence they may; and many a lance is broken and reddened, and there is great rending of pennons and ensigns. Many a good Frank loseth his youth, and will never again see wife or mother, or the men of France who await him in the passes. Charles the Great weeps for them, and makes great sorrow; but what availe it? no help shall they get therefrom. A ill turn Barnes son did them the day he sold his own kindred in Saragossa. Thereafter he lost both life and limb thereto; in the council at Aix, he was condemned to hang, & with him upon thirty of his kindred to whom death left no hope. Dread and sore is the battle. Roland and Oliver lay on valiantly, & the Archibishop deals more than a thousand buffets, nor are the Twelve Peers backward, and all the Franks smite as a man. The paynims are slain by hundreds and thousands, whose ver does not flee has no surety from death, but will he, nill he, must take his end. But the Franks lose their goodliest arms; lances adorned with gold, and trenchant spears, and gonfanons red and white & blue, and the blades of their good swords are broken, and thereto they lose many a valiant knight. Never again shall they see father or kindred, or Charles their liege lord who abides for them in the passes. Meantime, in France, a wondrous tempest broke forth, a mighty storm of wind and lightning, with rain and hail out of all measure, and bolts of thunder that fell ever & again; and verily there with came a quaking of the earth that ran from Saint Michael of the Peril, even unto Xanten, and from Besançon to the port of Guitsand; and there was not a dwelling whose walls were not rent asunder. And at noon fell a shadow of great darkness, nor was there any light save as the heavens opened. They that saw these things were sore afraid, and many a one said: 'This is the day of judgment, and the end of the world is at hand.' But they were deceived, & knew not whereof they spoke;

it was the great mornening for the death of Roland. Meantime the Franks smote manfully and with good courage, and the paynims were slain by thousands and by multitudes; of a hundred thousand not two may survive. Then said the Archibishop: 'Our Franks are of good prowe, no king under heaven hath better; it is written in the annals of France that valiant they are for our Emperor.' And the Franks fare through the field seeking their fellos, & weeping from dole and pity for their kin, in all love & kindness. Butte ven now King Marsilie is upon them with his great host. Count Roland is a knight of much worship, so likewise are Oliver & the Twelve Peers, and the Franks have dealt many a goodly blow. By their great might they have made such slaughter of paynims that of a hundred thousand, only one hath escaped, Margaris to wit. Blame him not that he fled, many a token he had to shew, for in his body he bore the wounds of four lances. Back he sarrd in haste towards Spain, and came to Marsilie and gave him tidings. Alone hath Count Margaris returned again; his lance is broken, and so pierced is his shield that about the boss no more is left but the breadth of a foot; all shattered is his green helmet, and broken are the mails of his hauberk; bright red is the blade of his sword, and he beareth in his body the wounds of four lances. He cometh from the field where fierce was the slaughter. God! what a vassal, & he had but Christianity. To King Marsilie he hath made known his story, and in a loud voice he crieth: 'Good King of Spain, now get ye to horse with your men; the Franks are weary and spent with the smiting & slaying of our Saracens; they have lost their shields and lances, & a good half of their men, and those who yet live are weakened, & the more part of them maimed and bleeding, nor have they more arms wherewith to help themselves. Easy now were the conquest; and if you pursue them forthright, lightly may ye avenge our own.' At his words the paynims spring to their feet. Meantime the Franks cast alond upon Roland and Oliver: 'Sir Roland, where art thou? Now succour us, ye Twelve Peers.' The first to answer them is the Archibishop: 'Ye men of God, now be ye proud & joyfull; to day shall your heads be crowned, and holy paradise shall be granted you.' Throughout the host men are stirred with dolour and pity, & each weepeth for the love of his fellos. But Roland crieth out: 'Lords, now ride forward; so, Marsilie with a hundred thousand knights comes upon us.' Marsilie comes on down the valley with the mighty host that he has assembled; full twenty battles the King has arrayed. There is a great shining of helmets, set with gold and precious stones, and of shields and of broidered hauberks. Seven thousand trumpets sound the onset, and the din thereof rings far and wide. Then saith Roland: 'Oliver, comrade & brother,anson the felon has sworn our death. The treason is manifest, & great vengeance shall the Emperor take therefore. The battle will be sore and great, such a one as

was never before seen of man. I will smite with Owendal my sword, and do thou, comrade, lay on with Hasteere. Through many lands have we carried them, and with them have we conquered many a battle, no ill song must be sung of them.' Then the Franks see how great is the multitude of the paynims, that on all sides they cover the field, they call upon Roland, and Oliver, and the Twelve Peers, that they be their defence. Then the Archibishop tells them his mind, saying: 'Lords, barons, put from you all covetous thoughts; & in God's name I pray you give not back. Better it were that we die in battle than that men of worship shold speak foully of us in their songs. Certain it is we shall straightway take our end, nor shall we from to day be living men; yet there is a thing I can promise ye, blessed Paradise shall be opened to you, and ye shall take your place among the innocent.' At his words, the Franks take heart, and every man cries out Monjoie. Wily and cunning is King Marsilie, and he saith to the paynims: 'Now know ye of a truth, this Roland is valiant and of wondrous might, & he who would overcome him must strive his uttermost; in two encounters he will not be vanquished methinks, and for this reason, we will give him three. Then Charles the King shall lose his glory, and ye shall see France fall into dishonour. Ten battles shall abide here with me, & the remaining ten shall set upon the Franks. Then to Brandonie he gave a broidered banner that he might lead the rest against the Franks. And Brandonie did according to his King's commandment. King Marsilie abides on the mountain, & Brandonie comes on down the valley. By three golden hails he has made fast his gonfanon; & he cries aloud: 'Now ride on, ye barons! And for the more goodly noise he bide them found a thousand trumpets. Say the Franks: 'God our Father, what shall we do? Woe worth the day we saw Count Ganelon! he hath sold us by foul treason. Now help us, ye Twelve Peers!' But the first to answer them is the Archibishop, saying: 'Good knights, this day great honour shall be yours, for God will give you crowns & flowers in Paradise among the glorious; but therein the coward shall not enter.' And the Franks make answer: 'We will lay on as one man, and though we die we will not betray him.' Then they spur on with their golden spurs to smite the misercant felons. In two parts hath Marsilie divided his army; ten battles he would keep with him, but the other ten ride to the onset. They let sound a thousand trumpets that men afar may hear them. And the Franks cry: 'God! what loss shall be ours! What shall befall us, O ye Twelve Peers?' The first to answer them is Archibishop Turpin: 'Good knights, God is much your friend. To day shall ye be crowned & flowered, seats shall ye have in the higher Paradise. Unt therein the coward shall not enter.' And the Franks make answer: 'We must not fail thee. May it not be God's will that we be mislaid. Still will we fight against the foe, & though our fellowship

be small, yet are we hardy. At these words they spur on to smite the Saracens. Now lo you, the Franks and the paynims join battle. Among the paynims is a Saracen of Saragossa, lord he is of half the city, and Climbolin, he height; never will he flee from any living man. He it was who received the pledge of Count Ganelon, kissed him in all friendship upon the lips, and gave him his helmet and his carbuncle. And he hath sworn to bring the Great Land to shame, & to strip the Emperor of his crown. He rides his horse whom he calls Barbamusehe, that is swifter than falcon or swallow; and slackening his rein, he spurs mightily, and rides upon Engelier of Gascony that neither shield nor byenie may save him, but he drives the head of his lance into his body, thrusting so manfully that the point thereof passes through to the other side, & with all the might of his lance hurls him in the field dead. Thereafter he cries: 'These folk are good to slay!' But the Franks say: 'Alack, that so good a knight should take his end.' And Count Roland speaks to Oliver, saying: 'Sir comrade, now is Engelier slain, nor have we any knight of more valour.' And the Count answers him, saying: 'Now God grant me to avenge him. He pricks on his horse with spurs of pure gold, and he grasps Hasteere—ruddy is the blade thereof—and with all his strength he smites the paynim; he drives the blow home that the Saracen falls; and the devils carry away his soul. Then Oliver slew Duke Alphaten, and cut off the head of Escababi, and unhorsed seven Arabs,—never again shall they do battle. Then said Roland: 'Wroth is my comrade, and now at my side he wins great worship; for such blows Charles holds not the more dear. And he cried aloud: 'To battle, knights, to battle!' Hard by is the paynim Valfabrun, that had stood godfather to King Marsilie; on the sea he is lord of four hundred dromonds, and all shipmen call upon his name. He it was who aforetime took Jerusalem by treason, violated the temple of Solomon, and slew the patriarch before the baptismal fonts. And he had sworn fellowship with Ganelon, and had given him a sword and a thousand mangons. He rides a horse called Brammond, swifter than any falcon; he spurs him well with his sharp spurs, and rides upon Samson the mighty Duke, breaks his shield, and rends his hauberk, and drives the flaps of his gonfanon into his body, and with all the force of his lance hurls him from the saddle dead. Lay on, paynim, for hardly we shall overthrow them!' But the Franks cry: 'God, woe worth the good baron!' When Roland sees that Samson is dead, ye may guess he is sore stricken, he spurs his horse and lets him run as fast as he may, in his hand he holds Owendal, of greater worth than is pure gold, and with all the might he hath, he smites the paynim on the helm set with gold and gems, and cuts through head and hauberk and body, and through the good saddle set with gold and jewels, deep into the back of the horse, & slays both him and his rider, who soever has done or joy thereof. Cry the paynims: 'That

Engelier is slain

Roland avenges Samson

was a woe full blow for us.' Then quoth Roland: 'No love have I for any one of ye, for yours is the pride & the iniquity.' Among the paynims is an African, Malquiant, son of King Maleud; his armour is all of the beaten gold, & brighter than all the rest it shines to heaven. His horse, which he calls Salt Perdut, is so swift that he has not his fellow in any four-footed beast. And now Malquiant rode on Ainscis, & smote him full on the shield that its scarlet and blue were hewn away, and he rent the sides of his hauberk, & drove his lance into his body, both point and shaft. Dead is the Count and done are his life days. Thereat cry the Franks: 'Alack for thee, good baron!' Through the press rides Turpin the Archibishop — another such priest never said mass, nor did with his own strength so great deeds of arms — & he crieth to the paynim: 'Now may God bring all evil upon thee! for thou hast slain one for whom my heart is sore stricken.' Then he set his good horse at a gallop, and smote Malquiant on his shield of Toledo, that he fell dead upon the green grass. Hard by is the paynim Brandonie, son of Capuc, King of Cappadocia; he rides a horse called Marimore, swifter than any bird that flies; he now slackens rein, and spurring well, thrusts mightily upon Berin, breaks his crimp, son shield that it falls from his shoulder, and rends all asunder his hauberk, and thereafter drives all his blue gonfanon into his body that he falls dead beside a great rock. Then he slays Berier, Berin's comrade, and Berengier, and Bupon of Saint Antonie; and thereafter he smote Austor, the mighty Duke that held Valence and the land along the Rhône, & killed him dead that the paynims had great joy thereof. But the Franks cry: 'How many of ours are stricken!' Roland holdes his reddish sword in his hand; he has heard the Franks make lament, and so great is his sorrow that his heart is nigh to bursting, and he faith to the paynims: 'Now may God bring all evil upon thee! Methinks thou shalt pay me dear for him thou hast slain.' And he spure his horse, which springs forward eagerly; and let who so will pay the price, the two knights join battle. Brandonie was a man of good prowest, of much valour and hardiness, & amid the way he encounters with Roland, & albeit before that time he had never set eyes upon him, he none the less knew him of a certainty by his look and countenance; and he could not but be sore adread at the sight, and fain would he have fled, but he could not. The Count smites him mightily that he rends all his helm down to the nasal, cleaves through nose & mouth and teeth, through the hauberk of fine mail, & all the body, spites the silver sides from off the golden saddle, and cuts deep into the back of the horse, that both he and his rider are slain beyond help. Thereat those of Spain make great lament, but the Franks cry: 'That was well stricken of our captain.' Wondrous and fierce is the battle; the Franks lay on in their wrath and their might, that hands and ribs & backs fall to earth, and garments are rent off to the

very flesh, & the blood runs down to the green grass. The paynims cry: 'We may not longer endure. May the curse of Ghahound fall upon the Great Land, for its folk have not their fellows so hardyngs.' And there was not a man but cried out: 'Marslie! haste, O King, for we are in sore need of thy help.' Wondrous and great is the battle. And still the Franks smite with their burnished lances. There is great dolor of folk, and many a man is slain and maimed and bledding, and one lies on another, or on his back, or face down. The Saracens may not longer endure, but howsoeuer unwillingly they must give back. And eagerly the Franks pursue after them. Marslie sees the slaughter of his people, and lets sound his horns & bugynes, and gets to horse with all his vassal host. In the foremost front rides the Saracen Abisine, the faldest knight of his fellowship, all compact of evil and villainy. He believes not in God the son of Mary; and he is black as melted pitch. Dearer than all the gold of Galicie he loves treachery and murder, nor did any man ever see him laugh or take disport. But he is a good man of arms, & bold to rashness, wherefore for he is well beloved of the felon King Marslie, & to him it is given to bear the Dragon, around which the paynims gather. The Archibishop hath small love for Abisine, and so soon as he sees him he is all desirous to smite him, & quietly, within himself, he saith: 'This Saracen seems a misbelieving felon, I had liefer die than not set upon him to slay him; never shall I love coward or cowardice.' Whereupon the Archibishop begins the battle. He rides the horse that he won from Broissaille, a King whom he slew in Denmark; the good steed is swift and keen, feathery fast, ioned of foot, & flat of leg; short in the thigh & large of croup, long of flank and high of back; his tail is white and yellow his mane, his head is the colour of the fawn, and small are his ears; of all four-footed beasts none may outstrip him. The Archibishop spurs mightily, and will not fail to meet with Abisine and smite him on his shield, a very marvel, set with gems, — topaz & amethysts, & precious crystals, & blazing carbuncles; the gift it was of Balafre the Amiral, who had received it of a devil in Dal Metas. Now Turpin smites it & spares it not, that after his buffet it has not the worth of a doit. And he pierces Abisine through the body, & hurls him dead in the open field. And the Franks say: 'That was a good deed of arms; in the hands of our Archibishop safe is the crostier.' And Count Roland speaks to Oliver, saying: 'Sir comrade, what say ye, is not the Archibishop a right good knight, that there is no better under heaven? for well he knowes how to smite with lance & spear?' Now let us aid him,' the Count makes answer. And at these wordes the Franks go into battle again; great are the blows and grievous the slaughter, and great is the dolor of the Christians. The Franks have lost much of their arms, yet still there are a good four hundred of naked swords with which they smite and hew on shining helmets. God, how many a head is

Turpin slays Malquiant

Brandonie is smitten down

XVII

clest intwain; and there is great rending of haubersks and unmailing of byrnies; and they smite off feet and hands and heads. The paynims cry: 'These Franks fore mishandle us, who so doth not defend himself hath no care for his life.' King Marsilie hears them make lament, and faith in his wrath: 'Terra Major, now may Mahound destroy thee, for thy folk hath discomfited mine, and hath destroyed and spoiled me of many cities which Charles of the white beard now holds; he hath conquered Rome and Apulia & Calabria, Constantinople, and Savony the wide, liefer had I die than flee before him. Paynims, now lay on that the Franks may have no surety. If Roland dies, Charles loseth the life of his body; if he lives, we shall all take our end.' ¶ The felon paynims again smite with their lances upon shields and bright helmets; so great is the shock of iron and steel that the flame springs out toward heaven; and lo, how the blood & the brains run down! Great is the dolour and grief of Roland when he sees so many good knights take their end; he calls to remembrance the land of France, and his uncle, Charlemagne the good King, and he cannot help but be heavy. ¶ Yet still he thrusteth through the press and did not leave from smiting. In his hand he held Durendal, his good sword, & rent haubersks, and broke helmets, and pierced hands and heads and trunks that he threw a hundred paynims to ground, they who had held themselves for good men of arms. ¶ And on his side the lord Oliver drove forward, smiting great blows; in his hand he held Hauteclere, his good & trusty sword that had not its fellow under heaven, save only Durendal, and with it he fought valourously; all stained he was with blood even to his arms. 'God,' saith Roland, 'that is a goodly baron. O gentle Count, all courage and all loyalty, this day our friendship must have an end, for to-day through great woe we twain must part. Never again shall we see the Emperor; never again shall there be such lamentation in fair France. The Frankish folk will pray for us, & in holy churches orisons will be offered; certes, our souls will come into Paradise.' Oliver slackens rein and spurs his horse, and in the thick of press comes nigh unto Roland, & one faith unto other: 'Comrade, keep near me; so long as death spares me I will not fail thee.' ¶ Would ye had seen Roland & Oliver hack & hew with their swords, & the Arch-bishop smite with his lance. We can reckon those that fell by their hands for the number thereof is written in charter and record; the Beste says more than four thousand. In four encounters all went well with the Franks, but the fifth was sore and grievous to them, for in this all their knights were slain save only sixty, spared by God's mercy. Before they die they will tell their lives dear. ¶ When Count Roland is ware of the great slaughter of his men, he turns to Oliver, saying: 'Sir comrade, as God may save thee, see how many a good man of arms lies on the ground; we may well have pity on sweet France, the fair, that must now be desolate of such barons. Ah, King and

friend, would thou wert here! Oliver, my brother, what shall we do? How shall we send him tidings?' 'Nay, I know not how to seek him,' saith Oliver; 'but liefer had I die than bring dishonour upon me.' ¶ Then saith Roland: 'I will found my horn of ivory, and Charles, as he passes the mountains, will hear it; and I pledge thee my faith the Franks will return again.' Then saith Oliver: 'Therein would be great shame for thee, and dishonour for all thy kindred, a reproach that would last all the days of their life. Thou wouldst not sound it when I bid thee, and now thou shalt not by my counsel. And if thou dost sound it, little valour will there be therein, for now both thy arms are stained with blood.' 'Yea,' the Count answers him, 'I have dealt some godly blows.' ¶ Then saith Roland: 'Here is our battle, I will blow a blast, & Charles the King will hear it.' 'That would not be knightly,' saith Oliver; 'when I bid thee, comrade, thou didst disdain it. Had the King been here, we had not suffered this damage; but they who are afar off are free from all reproach. By this my beard, and I see again my sister, Aude the Fair, never shalt thou lie in her arms.' ¶ Then saith Roland: 'Wherefore art thou wroth with me?' And Oliver answers him, saying: 'Comrade, thou thyself art to blame. Wise courage is not madness, and measure is better than rashness. Through thy folly these Franks have come to their death; nevermore shall Charles the King have service at our hands. Hadst thou taken my counsel, my liege lord had been here, and this battle had been ended, & King Marsilie had been or taken or slain. Woe worth thy prowess, Roland! Henceforth Charles shall get no help of thee; never till God's Judgment Day shall there be such another man; but thou must die, and France shall be shamed thereby. And this day our loyal fellowship shall have an end; before this evening grievously shall we be parted.' ¶ The Arch-bishop, hearing them dispute together, spurs his horse with his spurs of pure gold, & comes unto them, and rebukes them, saying: 'Sir Roland, and thou, Sir Oliver, in God's name I pray ye, let be this strife. Little help shall we now have of thy horn; and yet it were better to sound it; if the King come, he will revenge us, and the paynims shall not go hence rejoicing. Our Franks will light off their horses, & find us dead and maimed, & they will lay us on biers, on the backs of sumpters, and will weep for us with dole and pity; and they will bury us in the courts of churches, that we be not eaten by wolves and swine and dogs.' 'Sir, thou speakest well and truly,' quoth Roland. ¶ And therewith he sets his ivory horn to his lips, grasps it well & blows it with all the might he hath. High are the hills, and the sound echoes far, & for thirty full leagues they hear it resound. Charles and all his host hear it, and the King saith: 'Our men are at battle.' But Count Ganelon maketh answer: 'Had any other said so, we had deemed it great falsehood.' ¶ With dolour and pain, and in sore torment, Count Roland blows his horn of ivory, that the bright

2 Roland wold saye blon
his horn

But Oliver chideth him

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lood springs out of his mouth, & the temples of his brain are broken. Mighty is the blast of the horn, and Charles, passing the mountains, hears it, & Naymes hears it, and all the Franks listen & hear. Then saith the King: 'I hear the horn of Roland; never wouldest he sound it, and he were not at battle.' But Ganelon answers him, saying: 'Battle is there none; thou art old and white and hoary, and thy words are those of a child. Well thou knowest the great pride of Roland; — a marvel it is that God hath suffered it thus long. Aforetime he took Naples against thy commandment, and when the Saracens came out of the city and set upon Roland the good knight, he strewed them with Durandal his sword; thereafter with water he washed away the blood which stained the meadow, that none might know of what he had done.' ♦ ♦ ♦

'And for a single hour he will blow his horn all day long; & now he but boasts among his fellows, for there is no soul on earth would dare do him battle. I prithee ride on. Why tarry we? The Great Land still lies far before us.' Count Roland's mouth has burst out a bleeding, and the temples of his brain are broken. In dolor & pain he sounds his horn of ivory; but Charles hears it & the Franks hear it. Saith the King: 'Long drawn is the blast of that horn.' 'Yea,' Naymes answers, 'for in sore need is the baron who blows it. Certes, our men are at battle; and he who now dissembles hath betrayed Roland. Take your arms and cry your war-cry, and succour the men of your house. Dost thou not hear the cry of Roland?'

The Emperor has commanded that his trumpets be sounded, & now the Franks fight down from their horses and arm themselves with hauberks and helms & swords adorned with gold; fair are their shields, and goodly and great their lances, and their gonfanons are scarlet & white & blue. Then all the barons of the host get them to horse, and spur through the passes; and each saith to other: 'And if we may but see Roland a living man, we will strike good blows at his side.' But what availeth it? for they have abode too long. Clear is the evening as was the day, and all their armour glistens in the sun, and there is great shining of hauberks, and helms, and shields painted with flowers, & lances, and gilded gonfanons. The Emperor rides on in wrath, and the Franks are full of care and foreboding; and not a man but weeps full fore and hath great fear for Roland. Then the King let take Count Ganelon, and gave him over to the cooks of his household; and he called Besgon their chief, saying: 'Guard him well, as beseems a felon who hath betrayed my house.' Besgon took him, & set

a watch about him of a hundred of his fellows of the kitchen, both best and worst. They plucked out the hairs of Ganelon's beard and moustache, & each one dealt him four blows with his fist, and hardly they beat him with rods and staves; then they put about his neck a chain, and bound him even as they would a bear, and in derision they set him upon a sumpter. So they guard him till they return him unto Charles. High are the hills and great & dark, deep the valleys, & swift the waters. All the trumpets are sounded, both rear and van, and they give back the blast of the ivory horn. The Emperor rides on in wrath, and the Franks are full of care & foreboding; there is not a man but weepeth and inareth sore lament, praying to God that he spare Roland till they come unto the field, that at his side they may deal good blows. ♦



But what availeth it? They have tarried too long, & may not come in time. Charles the King rides on in great wrath, and over his hauberk is spread his white beard. And all the barons of France spurn might-

ily, not one but is full of wrath and grief that he is not with Roland the captain, who is at battle with the Saracens of Spain. Is he wounded, what hope that one soul be left alive? God, what a sty he still hath in his fellowship; no king or captain ever had better. Roland looks abroad over hills & heath and sees the great multitude of the Frankish dead, & he weeps for them as beseems a gentle knight, saying: 'Lords and barons now may God have mercy upon you, and grant Paradise to all your souls, that ye may rest among the blessed flowers. Never saw I better men of arms than ye were. Long and well, year in & year out, have ye served me, & many wide lands have ye won for the glory of Charles. Was it to such an end that he nourished you? O France, fair land, to-day art thou made desolate by rude slaughter. Ye Frankish barons, I see ye die through me, yet can I do naught to save or defend you. May God, who knows no lie, aid you! Oliver, brother, I must not sail thee; yet I shall die of grief, and I be not slain by the sword. Sir comrade, let us get us into battle.' So Count Roland falls a-smiting again. He holds Durandal in his hand, and lays on right valiantly, that he cleaves in twain Falderon de Pui, & slays four and twenty of the most worshipful of the paynims. Never shall ye see man more desirous to revenge himself. And even as the hart flies before the hounds, so flee the heathen from before Roland. 'Thou dost rightly,' then said the Archbishop; such valour well beseems a knight who bears arms and sits a good horse; in battle such a one shouldest be self and mighty, or he is not worth four de-

Charles turneth back

Ganelon a felon

XIX

niers, and it behooves him to turn monk and get him into a monastery to pray the livelong day for our sins.' And Roland answered him, saying: 'Smite and spare not.' And at these words the Franks go into battle again; but great is the slaughter of the Christians. That man who knows he shall get no mercy deserves him savagely in battle. Wherefore the Franks are fierce as lions. And now behold you, Marsilie, how like a true baron he sits his horse Baignon; he spurs him well and rides on Bevou—lord he was of Beaune and Dijon—and breaks his shield, & rends his hauberk, & drives the flaps of his gonsanor into his body, that he smites him dead to ground beyond all ransoms. And thereafter he slew Ivon & Ivorie, and with them Gerard the Old of Roussillon. Now nigh at hand is Count Roland, & he saith to the paynim: 'May the Lord God bring thee to mishap! And because thou hast wrongfully slain my comrades thou shalt thyself get a buffet before we twain dispart, & this day thou shalt learn the name of my sword.' And therewith he rides upon him like a true baron, and smites of his right hand, and thereafter he takes off the head of Jusfaire the Fair, the son of King Marsilie. Thereat the paynims cry: 'Now help us, Marsilie! O ye, our gods, revenge us upon Charles! He has sent out against us into our marches men so fierce that though they die they will not give back.' And one saith to another: 'Let us fly.' At these words a hundred thousand turn and flee, and let whosoever will, catch them, they will not return again. King Marsilie has lost his right hand, & Turfaleu he seeth dead on the ground; he throwe his shield to earth, & pricks on his horse with his sharp spurs, and with slackened rein, flees away towards Spain. Upon twenty thousand Saracens follow after him, nor is there one among them who is not maimed or hurt of body, & they say one to another: 'The nephew of Charles has won the field.' But alack, what availeth it? for though Marsilie be fled, his uncle the Caliph yet abides, he who ruled Aferne, Carthage, Barmasse, and Ethiopia, a cursed land; under his lordship he has the black folk, great are their noses and large their ears, & they are with him to the number of fifty thousand. And now they come up in pride & wrath, & cry aloud the war-cry of the paynims. Then saith Roland: 'Now must we needs be slain, and well I know we have but a little space to live; but cursed be he who doth not sell himself right dear. Lay on, lords, with your burnished swords, & debate both life and death; let not sweet France be brought to shame through us. When Charles, my liege lord, shall come into this field, he will see such slaughter of the Saracens, that he shall find fifteen of them dead over against each man of ours, and he will not fail to bless us.' When Roland sees the cursed folk whose skin is blacker than any ink, and who have naught of white about them save their teeth, he saith: 'Now I know in very sooth that we shall die this day. Lay on, lords, & yet again I bid thee, smite.' Now foul salt him who lags be-

hind,' quoth Oliver. And at this word the Franks haste into the fray. Now when the paynims see how few are the Franks, they have great pride and joy thereof; and one saith to another: 'Centes, the Emperor is in the wrong.' The Caliph bestrides a sorrel horse, he pricks him on with his spurs of gold, & smites Oliver from behind, amid the bach, that he drives the mails of his white hauberk into his body, and his lance passes out through his breast. 'Now hast thou got a good buffet,' quoth the Caliph. 'On an ill day Charles the Great left thee in the passes; much wrong hath he done us, yet he shall not boast thereof, for on thee alone have I well revenged us.' Oliver feels that he is wounded unto death; in his hand he holds Hasteclere, bright was its blade, & with it he smites the Caliph on his golden-pointed helmet, that its flowers and gems fall to earth, and he cleaves the head even unto the teeth, and with the force of the blow smote him dead to earth, & said: 'Foul salt thee, paynim! Say not that I am come to my death through Charles; and neither to thy wife, nor any other dame, shalt thou ever boast in the land from which thou art come, that thou hast taken from me so much as one farthing's worth, or hast done any hurt to me or to others.' And thereafter he called to Roland for succour. Oliver feels that he is wounded unto death; never will he have his fill of vengeance. In the thick of the press he smites valiantly, cleaving lances and embossed shields, and feet and hands and flanks and shoulders. Whosoever saw him thus dismember the Saracens, and hurt one dead upon another, must call to mind true valiance; nor did he forget the war-cry of Charles, but loud and clear he cries out Monjoie! And he calleth to Roland, his friend and peer: 'Sir comrade, come stand thou beside me. In great dolour shall we twain soon be disparted.' Roland looks Oliver in the face, pale it is and livid and all discoloured; the bright blood flows down from amid his body & falls in streams to the ground. 'God,' saith the Count, 'now I know not what to do. Sir comrade, woe worth thy valour! Never shall the world see again a man of thy might. Alas, fair France, to-day art thou stripped of godly rassals, and fallen and undone. The Emperor will suffer great loss thereby.' And so speaking he swoons upon his horse. Lo, Roland has swooned as he sits his horse, & Oliver is wounded unto death, somuch has he bled that his sight is darkened, and he can distinguish no living man, whether far off or near at hand; and now, as he meets his comrade, he smites him upon the helm set with gold & gems, and cleaves it down to the nasal, but does not come unto the head. At the blow Roland looks up at him, and asks him full softly and gently: 'Comrade, dost thou this wittingly? I am Roland, who has so loved thee. Never yet hast thou mistrusted me.' Then saith Oliver: 'Now I hear thee speak, but I cannot see thee; may the Lord God guard thee. I have struck thee, but I pray thy pardon.' 'Thou hast done me no hurt,' Roland answers him; 'I pardon thee before God, as here and now.'

Oliver fore hurt

The comrades dispersed

So speaking each leans forward to wards other, & so, in such friendship they are disparted. ¶ Oliver feels the anguish of death come upon him; his two eyes turn in his head; and his hearing goes from him, and all sight. He lighteth down from his horse and lies upon the ground, & again and again he confesses his sins; he holds out his clasped hands toward heaven and prays God that he grant him paradise, and he blesses Charles and sweet France, and Roland, his comrade, above all men. Then his heart fails him, & his head sinks upon his breast, and he lies stretched at all his length upon the ground. Dead is the Count & gone from hence. Roland weeps for him and makes lament; never on the earth shall ye see a man so sorrowful. When Count Roland sees his friend lie prone and dead, facing the East, grieved he begins to lament him. ¶



Roland makes lament.

'Sir comrade, woe worth thy hardiness! We twain have held together for years and days, never didst thou me wrong or I thee. Since thou art dead, alack that I yet live.' So speaking, the Count swoons as he sits weeping on his horse, but his stirrups of pure gold hold him firm, and let him go where he will, he cannot fall. ¶ So soon as Roland comes to his senses, & is restored from his swoon, he is ware of the great slaughter about him. Slain are the Franks, he has lost them all save only Gualter del Hum & the Arch-bishop. Gualter has come down from the mountains where he fought hardily with those of Spain; the paynims conquered, & his men are slain, and howsoever unwillingly, he must perforce flee down into the valley & call upon Roland for succour. ¶ Gentle Count, brave captain, where art thou? for where thou art I have no fear. It is I, Gualter, who conquered Maellgut, I the nephew of Droon the old, the hoary, I whom thou wert wont to love for my hardihood. Now my shield is pierced, and the shaft of my lance is broken, and my hauberk rent and unmailed; I have the wounds of eight lances in my body, & I must die, but dear have I sold myself. So he saith, & Roland hears him, & spurs his horse and rides towards him. ¶ 'Sir Gualter,' then saith Count Roland, 'thou hast, as I know, done battle with the paynims, and thou art a hardy & valiant warrior. A thousand good knights thou didst take with thee, my men they were, and now I would ask them of thee again; give them over to me, for sore is my need.' But Gualter makes answer: 'Never again shall ye see one of them alive. I left them on the dolorous field. We encountered a great host of Saracens, Turks & Armenians, Persians, and men of Canaan and of Jude, warriors of the best, mounted on swift Arabian horses. And we

The coming of Gualter.

fought a battle so fierce that never a paynim shall boast thereof, fifty thousand lie dead and bleeding; & we, on our part, lost all our Franks, but vengeance we took therefor with our swords of steel. Rent and torn is my hauberk, and deadly wounds I have in side and flank, and from all my body flows out the bright blood, and takes from me my strength; certes, my time is nigh spent. Thy man am I, and I look to thee as protector. Blame me not, that I fled.' Nay, I blame thee no whit,' quoth Count Roland. 'But now do thou aid me, so long as thou art a living man.' ¶ Full sorrowful is Roland & of great wrath; he falls a-smiting in the thick of the press, and of those of Spain he cast twenty to the ground dead, and Gualter slew six, & Turpin the Arch-bishop slew five. Then say the paynims: 'Fierce and fell are these men.' ♦ ♦ ♦

Take ye heed, lords, that they go not hence alive. He who doth not set upon them is traitor, and recreant he who lets them go hence.' Then the hue and cry begins again, & from all sides they close about the three Franks. ¶ Count Roland is a full noble warrior, and a right good knight is Gualter del Hum, the Arch-bishop is of good valor and well tried; not one would for aught leave his fellows, and together, in the thick of the press, they smite the paynims. A thousand Saracens get them to foot, and there are still forty thousand on horseback, yet in sooth they dare not come nigh unto the three, but they hurl upon them lances and spears, arrows and darts and sharp javelins. In the first storm they slew Gualter, and sundered the shield of Turpin of Rheims, broke his helmet and wounded him in his head, and rent & tore his hauberk; that he was pierced in the body by four spears; & his horse was slain under him. The Arch-bishop falls; great is the pity thereof. ¶ But so soon as Turpin of Rheims finds himself beaten down to earth with the wounds of four lances in his body, he right speedily gets him afoot again; he looks toward Roland, and hastens to him, and saith: 'I am nowise vanquished; no good vassal yield's him so long as he is a living man.' And he draws Almace, his sword of brown steel, & in the thick of the press he deals well more than a thousand buffets. Afterwards Charles bore witness that Turpin spared not the paynims, for around him they found four hundred dead, some wounded, some cut in twain amid the body, and some whose heads had been smitten off; so saith the Besiege & he who was on the field, the valiant Saint Gilles, for whom God wrought miracles; he it was who wrote the annals of the monastery of Laon. And he who knows not this, knows naught of the matter.

XXI

Count Roland fights right nobly, but all his body is a' sweat and burning hot, and in his head he hath great pain & torment, for when he sounded his horn he rent his temples. But he would fain know that Charles were coming, he takes his horn of ivory, and feebly he sounds it. The Emperor stops to listen: 'Lords,' he saith, 'no w has great woe come upon us, this day shall we lose Roland my nephew, I wot from the blast of his horn that he is nigh to death. Let him who would reach the field ride fast. No w sound ye all the trumpets of the host.' Then they blew sixty thousand, so loud that the mountains resound and the valleys give answier. The paynims hear them and have no will to laugh, but one faiths to another: 'We shall have ado with Charles anon. The Emperor is returning, we hear the trumpets of France.' ♦ ♦ ♦



Say the paynims: 'If Charles come hither, we shall suffer sore loss. Yet if Roland live, our war will begin again, and we shall lose Spain our land.' Then four hundred armed in their helmets, and of the best of those on the field, gather together, and on Roland they make onset fierce & sore. Now is the Count hard beset. When Count Roland sees them drawn near he wages hardy & fierce & terrible; never will he yield as long as he is a living man. He sits his horse Beissantif, and spurs him well with his spurs of fine gold, & rides into the stone upon them all; & at his side is Archibishop Turpin. And the Saracens say one to another: 'Now save yourselves, friends. We have heard the trumpets of France; Charles the mighty King is returning.' Count Roland never loved the cowardly, or the proud, or the wicked, or any knight who was not a good vassal; & now he calls to Archibishop Turpin, saying: 'Lord, thou art on foot and I am a horseback, for thy love I would make halt, & together we will take the good and the ill; I will not leave thee for any living man; the blows of Almace & of Durandal shall now give back this assault to the paynims.' Then saith the Archibishop: 'A traitor is he who doth not smite; Charles is returning, and well will he revenge us.' In an evil hour,' say the paynims, 'were we born; woe is the day that has dawned for us! We have lost our lords & our peers. Charles the valiant cometh hither again with his great host, we hear the clear trumpets of those of France, and great is the noise of their cry of Monjoie. Count Roland is of such might he cannot be vanquished by any mortal man. Let us hurl our missiles upon him, & then leave him.' Even so they did; and cast upon him many a dart and javelin, & spears and lances and feathered arrows. They broke and rent the shield of Roland, tore open

& unnailed his hauberk, but did not pierce his body; but Beissantif was wounded in thirty places, and fell from under the Count, dead. Then the paynims flee, and leave him; Count Roland is left alone & on foot.

The paynims flee in anger and wrath, and in all haste they fare toward Spain. Count Roland did not pursue after them, for he has lost his horse Beissantif, & whether he will or no, is left on foot. He went to the help of Archibishop Turpin, and unlaced his golden helm from his head, & took off his white hauberk of fine mail, and he tore his tunic into strips and with the pieces bound his great wounds. Thereafter he gathers him in his arms, and lays him down full softly upon the green grass; and gently then he beseeches him: 'O gracious baron, I pray thy leave. Our comrades whom we so loved are slain.' ♦ ♦ ♦

The flight of the Saracens

It is not meet to leave them thus. I would go seek and find them, and range them before thee.' 'Go and return again,' quoth the Archibishop. 'Thank God, this field is thine & mine.'

Count Roland turns a way & fares on alone through the field; he searches the valleys and the hills; and there he found Ivon and Ivorie, & Berin, & Berier his comrade, and he found Engeler the Gafeon, and Berengier, and Oton, and he found Anfeis and Samfon, and Gerard the Old of Rousillon. One by one he hath taken up the barons, & hath come with them unto the Archibishop, & places them in rank before him. The Archibishop cannot help but weep; he raiseth his hand & gives them benediction, & thereafter saith: 'Alas for ye, lords! May God the Glorious receive your souls, & bring them into Paradise among the blessed flowers. And now my own death torments me sore; never again shall I see the great Emperor.' Again Roland turned away to search the field; and when he found Oliver his comrade, he gathered him close against his breast, and as best he might returned again unto the Archibishop, and laid his comrade upon a shield beside the others; and the Archibishop absolved and blessed him. Then their sorrow and pity broke forth again, and Roland saith: 'Oliver, fair comrade, thou wert son of the great Duke Reinier, who held the marches of Rivier and Genoa; for the breaking of lances or the piercing of shields; for vanquishing & affrighting the proud, for upholding and counseilling the good, never in any land was there a better knight.' When Roland seeth his peers, and Oliver whom he so loved, lying dead, pity takes him and he begins to weep; and his face is all discoloured; so great is his grief he cannot stand upright, but will he, nill he, falls to the ground in a swoon. Saith the Archibishop: 'Alack for thee, good

Roland seeketh the three peers

XXII

baron. When the Archbisshop fees Roland swoon, he has such dole as he has never known before. He stretches out his hand and takes the horn of ivory, for in Ronceval there is a swift streamlet, & he woulde go to it to bring of its water to Roland. Slowly and falteringly he sets forth, but so weak he is he cannot walk, his strength has gone from him, too much blood has he lost, and before a man might cross an acre his heart faileth, and he falls forward upon his face, & the anguish of death comes upon him. When Count Roland recovers from his swoon he gets upon his feet with great torment; he looks up & he looks down, and beyond his comrades, on the green grass, he sees that goodly baron, the Archbisshop, appointed of God in his stead. Turpin faith his mea culpa, & looks up, and stretches out his two hands towards heaven, & prays God that he grant him Paradise. And so he dies, the warrior of Charles. Long had he waged strong war against the paynims, both by his mighty batteling and his goodly sermons. May God grant him his holy benison. Count Roland sees the Archbisshop upon the ground; his bowels have fallen out of his body, & his brains are oozing out of his forehead; Roland takes his fair, white hands and crosses them upon his breast between his two collar bones; lifting up his voice, he mourns for him, after the manner of his people: Ah gentle baron, knight of high parentage, now I command thee to the heavenly Glory; never will there be a man who shall serve him more willingly; never since the days of the apostles hath there been such a prophet to uphold the law, and win the hearts of men; may thy foul sufferno dole or torment, but may the doors of Paradise be opened to thee. Now Roland feels that death is near him, and his brains flow out at his ears; he prays to the Lord God for his peers that he will receive them, and he prays to the Angel Gabriel for himself. That he may be free from all reproach, he takes his horn of ivory in the one hand, and Durandal, his sword, in the other, and farther than a cross bow can cast an arrow, through a corn field he goeth on towards Spain. At the crest of a hill, beneath two fair trees, are four stones of marble; there he falleth down on the green grass in a swoon, for death is close upon him. High are the hills & very tall are the trees; the four stones are of shining marble; and there Count Roland swoons upon the green grass. Meantime a Saracen is watching him; he has stained his face and body with blood, and feigning death, he lies still among his fellows; but now he springs to his feet and hastens forward. Fair he was, & strong, and of good courage; and in his pride he breaks out into mighty wrath, and seizes upon Roland, both him and his arms, and he cries: 'Now is the nephew of Charles overthrown. This his sword will I carry into Arabia.' But at his touch the Count recovered his senses. Roland feels that his sword hath been taken from him, he opens his eyes, and saith: 'Certes, thou art not one of ourmen.' He holdes his horn of ivory which he never lets out of his grasp, and he smites

the Saracen upon the helm which was studded with gold and gems, & he breaks steel and head and bones that his two eyes start out, and he falleth down dead at his feet. Then saith Roland: 'Coward, what made thee so bold to lay hands upon me, whether right or wrong? No man shall hear it but shall hold thee a fool. Now is my horn of ivory broken in the bell, and its gold & its crystals have fallen.' Now Roland feels that his sight is gone from him. With much stirring he gets upon his feet; the colour has gone from his face; before him lies a brown stone, & in his sorrow & wrath he smites ten blows upon it. The sword grates upon the rock, but neither breaks nor splinters; & the Count saith: 'Holy Mary, help me now! Ah Durandal, alas for your goodness! Now am I near to death, and have no more need of you. Many a fight in the field have I won with you, many a wide land have I conquered with you, lands now ruled by Charles with the white beard. May the man who would flee before another, never possess you. For many a day have you been held by a right good lord, never will there be such another in France the free.' Roland smote upon the block of hard stone, and the steel grates, but neither breakes nor splinters. And when he sees that he can in nowise break it, he laments, saying: 'O Durandal, how fair and bright thou art, in the sunlight how thou shonest and shinest! Charles was once in the valley of Moriane, when from heaven God commanded him by one of his angels that he shold give thee to a chieftain Count; then the great and noble King girded thee upon me; and with thee I won for him Anjou and Bretagne, & I conquered Poitou and Maine for him, and for him I conquered Normandy the free, and Provence, and Aquitaine; and Lombardy, & all of Romagna; and I conquered for him Bavaria, and Flanders, and Bulgaria, and all of Poland; Constantinople which now pays him fealty, & Savoy, where he may work his will. And I conquered for him Wales, and Scotland, and Ireland, and England which he holds as his demesne. Many lands & countries have I won with thee, lands which Charles of the white beard rules. And now am I heavy of heart because of this my sword; rather would I die than that it shold fall into the hands of the paynims. Lord God our Father, let not this shame fall upon France.' And again Roland smote upon the brown stone and beyond all telling shattered it; the sword grates, but springs back again into the air and is neither dinted nor broken. And when the Count sees he may in nowise break it, he laments, saying: 'O Durandal, how fair and holy a thing thou art! In thy golden hilt is many a relic,—a tooth of Saint Peter, and some of the blood of Saint Basil, & hairs from the head of my lord, Saint Denis, and a bit of the raiment of the Virgin Mary. It is not meet that thou fall into the hands of the paynims, only Christians shold wield thee. May no coward ever possess thee! Many wide lands have I conquered with thee, lands which Charles of the white beard rules;

The death of the Archbisshop

Roland feeleth death neare him

XXIII

and thereby is the Emperor great & mighty. Now Roland feels that death has come upon him, & that it creeps down from his head to his heart. In all haste he fares under a pine tree, & hath cast himself down upon his face on the green grass. Under him he laid his sword and his horn of ivory; & he turned his face towards the paynim folk, for he woulde that Charles and all his men shoulde say that the gentle Count had died a conqueror. Speedily and full often he confesses his sins, and in atonement he offers his glove to God. Roland lies on a high peak looking towards Spain; he feels that his time is spent, and with one hand he beats upon his breast: 'O God, I have sinned; for give me through thy might the wrongs, both great & small, which I have done from the day I was born even to this day on which I was smitten. With his right hand he holds out his glove to God; and so, the angels of heaven come down to him. Count Roland lay under the pine tree; he has turned his face towards Spain, and he begins to call many things to remembrance,—all the lands he had won by his valour, & sweet France, & the men of his lineage, and Charles, his liege lord, who had brought him up in his house hold; and he cannot help but weep. But he wouldest not wholly forget himself, & again he confesses his sins and begs forgiveness of God: 'Our Father, who art truth, who raised up Lazarus from the dead, & who defended Daniel from the lions, save thou my soul from the peril to which it is brought through the sins I wrought in my life days.' With his right hand he offers his glove to God, and Saint Gabriel hastaken it from his hand. Then his head sinks on his arm, and with clasped hands he hath gone to his end. And God sent him his cherubim, and Saint Michael of the peril, and with them went Saint Gabriel, and they carried the soul of the Count into Paradise.

LXI. The Vengeance of Charles.

Dead is Roland, God in heaven has his soul. The Emperor has come into Roncevals. There is no road, nor path, nor open space of land, though it be but the width of an ell or the breadth of a foot, that is not strewn with Franks or paynims. And Charles cries out: 'Where art thou, fair nephew? Where is Count Oliver, & where the Archibishop? Where is Berin, & Berier his comrade? Where is Oton the Duke, and Count Berengier, and Iron and Ivorie whom I hold so dear? What has been fallen Engelier the Gascon, Samson the Duke, and Anselsis the Proud? Where is Gerard the Old of Ronfillon? Where are the Twelve Peers that I left behind me? But what avails his call since no one gives answer?' O God,' saith the King, 'much it weighs on me that I was not here to begin the onset, & he plucks at his beard even as a man in wrath. His knights & barons weep, and twenty thousand fall swooning to the ground; great is the sorrow of Napmes the Duke. Mighty is the woe at Roncevals. There is no

knight or baron but weeps right sore for pity. They weep for their sons and brothers and nephews, and for their friends, & for their liege lords; many a one falleth swooning to the ground. But Duke Naymes bears him like a man of valour, he is the first to bespeak the Emperor, saying: 'Look two leagues before us, & ye may see the dust of the highroads, where fares the throng of the paynim folk. I prithee ride on and revenge this woe.' Ah God,' saith Charles, 'already are they far from us. Now grant me justice and honour. They have taken from me the flower of sweet France.' Then the King commands Bebuin & Odo, Trebalt of Rheims & Count Milon, saying: 'Guard ye this field, the valleys and the mountains; let the dead lie even as they are, let not the living or any wild beast come nigh them, neither the sergeants nor the varlets, let not any man lay hands on them, until God grants us to return to this field.' And they answered him gently in their love: 'Just Emperor, dear lord, even so will we do.' And they keep with them a thousand of their knights. The Emperor bids the trumpets be sounded, and then he rides on with his great host. They have found the traces of those of Spain, & they pursue after them, and all are of one mind. And when the King sees the night coming on, he dismounts in a meadow of green grass, and casts himself upon the ground, & prays to the Lord God that he make the sun to stand still for him, the darkness to delay the sight to abide. And an angel that was wont to speak with him, straightway commanded him, saying: 'Charles, mount thy horse, & the light shall not fail thee. Thou hast lost the flower of France, and this God knows; it is granted thee to revenge thyself upon this guilty folk.' At these words the Emperor gets him to horse. For Charles God has wrought a great wonder; & the sun is stayed in the heavens. The heathen flee, and fiercely the Franks pursue them; in Val Tenebre they come upon them; & with their swords they drive them towards Saragossa, & slay them as they go with great slaughter; & they cut them off from the roads and the footways. The stream of the Ebro is before them, deep it is, and swift and terrible, & there is neither ferry nor barge nor dromond. The paynims call upon their god Tervagant; then they leap into the stream, but find no safety. The armed knights are the heaviest, & some among them sink to the bottom, others are swept along by the current, and even those who fare best drink deep of the water; all alike are miserably drowned. And the Franks cry to them, saying: 'Woe worth the day ye saw Roland!' When Charles sees that all the paynims are dead, some stain by the sword, & the more part drowned—great was the booty his knights had of them—the gentle King dismounts, and casts himself upon the ground & gives thanks to God. When he again gets upon his feet the sun is set. 'Time it is to make encampment,' he saith; 'too late it is to return again to Roncevals. Our horses are weary and spent; take off their saddles & bridles, and let them graze in the meadow.' Lord,

Charles pursues the
paynims and destroys their
army

The Franks encamp by
the Ebro

thou sapest well & truly, the Franks make answere.
¶ The Emperor has made stay for the night. The Franks dismount beside the Ebro; they unsaddle their horses, & take the golden bridles from off their heads, and they turn them into the meadowe where is good plenty of fresh grafe; no other cheer can they make them. Those who are weary sleep upon the ground; that night no guard was set. ¶ The Emperor lies him down in the meadow; at his head he puts his great lance; this night he will not disarm himself, but dons his white and broidered hauberk, laces his gold-adorned helmet, and girds on Ioyeuse,—never was there its like, thirty times a day it changes its light. Much we might tell you of the spear with which Our Lord was pierced upon the cross; Charles has the point thereof, thanks be to God, and has encased it in the golden hilt of his sword; for this honour and excellency it has been called Ioyeuse. The barons of France should hold this in mind, for from this, they took their cry of Monjoie; and thus it is that no folk can withstand them. ¶ Clear is the night & fair the moon. Charles lies upon the ground, but is full of dole for Roland, and right heavy of heart because of Oliver, & the Twelve Peers, & the Frankish folk that he has left at Ronceval dead & stained with blood; he cannot help but weep & make lament, & he prays God that he save their souls. Weary is the King, for his woe is very great, and he sleeps, he cannot help but sleep. Now throughout all the fields the Franks lie at rest; nor is there a horse with strength to stand upon his feet, if any wishes grafe he takes it as he lies. Much has he learned who knows sorrow. Charles sleeps like a man spent with toil and grief. God sent Saint Babtie to him, & bid him guard the Emperor. All night the angel watched by his pillow, and in a vision he made known to him a battle which is to be levied against him and the grave import thereof. Charles looks up into the heavens, and sees thunder and cold & whitewinde, storms & mighty tempests, & fire & flame are kindled there; & all these straight-way fall upon his people. The fire burns their lances of ash wood and apple, and their shields even to the bosses of pure gold; the shafts of their sharp lances are shattered, & their haubeks and helmets of steel are destroyed. Hore beslead are his knights, lions and leopards are ready to devour them, serpents and vipers, dragons, and devils; & of griffons there are more than thirty thousand; & all these fall upon the Franks. They cry: 'Help us, Charles!' The King is full of grief and pity for their sake, & would fain go to them, but he is withheld; for from without the wood comes a great lion proud and mighty and fierce, he sets upon the King's feet, and each clasps other in the struggle; but who conquers and who falls is not made plain. Still the Emperor does not waken. ¶ Thereafter came another vision to him, and it seemed to him that he was at Aix in France on a terrace, and was holding a bear in a double chain, when he saw coming from Ardennes thirty more bears, who spoke to him as they

had been men, saying: 'Give him to us again, lord, it is not just that ye withhold him from us; it is our part to rescue our kinsman.' But even then from without the palace ran a deerhound, and set upon the greatest of the bears, a little apart from his fellows on the green grafe. Then saw the King a wondrous battle, but he knew not which won or which failed therein. These things God's angel made manifest to the baron. And Charles slept even to bright day. ¶ King Marsile has fled away to Saragossa, & lights down from his horse under the shade of an olive; he takes off sword & helmet and byrnie, and casts himself all woe-begone upon the green grafe. He has lost his right hand and swoons from pain and loss of blood. Beside him Braminonde, his wife, weeps & makes lament, bitterly she bewails herself; & with her are more than thirty thousand men who all curse Charles and fair France. They haste to their god Apollon in a grotto hard by, and upbraid him, and lay rude hands upon him, saying: 'O cruel god, why hast thou brought this shame upon us? why hast thou let our King be vanquished? An ill reward thou givest him who has served thee well.' Then they took away his sceptre and his crown, and dragged him down from the column with their hands, & trod him to earth under their feet; with great staves they beat him and brake him to bits. And they robbed Tervagant of his carbuncle; & they cast Mahound into a ditch, for the dogs & the pigs to worry and gnaw. ¶ Marsile has recovered from his swoon, and they have brought him into his vaulted chamber, painted and inscribed with many colours. And Braminonde the Queen weeps for him, tears her hair, and makes great moan. Then she lifts up her voice and cries aloud: 'O Saragossa, now art thou made desolate of the gentle King who held thee in fee. Traitors to him were the gods who failed him this day in battle. The Admiral will do cowardly, & he does not set upon this bold people, who are so proud they recknot of life. The Emperor of the hoary beard is valiant and of good courage; if there be a battle he will not flee the field. Woe is there is none to slay him.' ¶ The Emperor by his might has abode for seven long years in Spain; he has taken its castles & many a city. King Marsile has striven against him; and in the first year he sent feal letters, and sent them to Waligant in Babylon—he is the old Admiral of antiquity, who has outlived Homer and Virgil—that he come with succour to Saragossa; if he comes not, Marsile fwears he will forsake his gods and all the idole he was wont to worship, and will receive the Christian faith, and will make peace with Charles. But the Admiral is afar off & has tarried long. From forty kingdoms he has summoned his people; he has had his great dromonds made ready, his boats and barges & galleys & ships; all his fleet he has gathered together at his port of Alexandria. It is in May, on the first day of summer, that all his armies embark on the sea. ¶ Great is the host of this hostile folk, and swiftly they steer with sail and oar. On the yards &

Of the two visions of
Charles

topmasts are hung many a lantern and carbuncle, & from on high they shed forth such a brightness that by night the sea is yet more fair. And as they draw near to the land of Spain all the countryside is lighted thereby and illumined; and the news thereof comes to Marsilie. ¶ The paynim folk would make no stay, they leave the sea & come into fresh water; they leave behind them Marbrise and Marbruse, and pass with all their ships up the Ebro. They have lanterns and carbuncles without number, which give them light all the night through. And with the day they come to Saragossa. ¶ Fair is the day & bright the sun. The Admiral has left his ship; at his right hand walks Espanelis, and seventeen kings follow after him, & counts and dukes I know not how many. Under a laurel tree, amid an open field, they spread a cloth of white silk upon the green grass, and by it they placed a throne of ivory, whereon sits the paynim Balsigant, and all the rest stand about him. Their lord was the first to speak: 'Now hearken brave knights and free: Charles, the Emperor of the Franks, must eat no more, unless I so command it. He has waged strong war upon me throughout all Spain; and now I would seek him in fair France, nor will I rest my life long until he be slain, or yields him alive.' And with his glove he smites his right knee. ¶ So said he, & maintains that for all the gold under heaven he will not fail to go unto Aix, where Charles is wont to hold his court. And his men gave him counsel and praised him. Then he called two of his knights, Clarien and Clarisan, saying: 'Ye are sons of King Galtraien who was ever a ready messenger; & now I command you that you go unto Saragossa, and say to Marsilie that I am come to aid him against the Franks; if I come upon their host, great will be the battle. Give him now this glove embroidered with gold, give it into his right hand, and take to him this baton of pure gold, and let him come to me to do me homage. And there's after I will go into France to war upon Charles; if he doth not fall at my feet and cry my mercy, and doth not forsake the faith of the Christians, I will strip the crown from off his head.' Well said, lord, 'the paynims make answer. ¶ 'Now face ye forth, barone,' saith Balsigant; 'let one carry the glove, the other the staff.' Even so will we do, dear lord,' they make answer. So they rode forth till they came unto Saragossa. They pass ten gates and cross four bridges, and fare through the streets where dwell the burgesses. As they draw nigh to the upper city, they hear a mighty noise from about the palace, where a great throng of the paynims are weeping and making great dole; and they cry out upon their gods Tervagant & Mahound and Apolon, who have no whit availed them. And one saith to another: 'Woe is me, what will become of us? Now are we undone, for we have lost King Marsilie, yesterday Roland smote off his right hand; and Turfalen the Fair hath been taken from us; and now all Spain will fall into the hands of the Franks.' Meantime the two messengers dismount at the stairs

way. ¶ They have left their horses under an olive tree; two Saracens took the bridles, and the messengers, each holding the other's mantle, mounted to the highest palace. As they enter the vaulted chamber they give greeting to Marsilie in all friendship: 'May Mahound who hath us in his power, & our lord Apolon, & Tervagant save the King & keep the Queen.' 'We speak folly,' then saith Bramimonde, 'for these our gods have proved recreant; little virtue they shewed at Roncavalo; they let our knights be slain, & failed my lord in battle, he has lost his right hand, smitten off it was by Roland the mighty Count. Anon Charles will have all Spain in his power. What will become of me, caitiff and wretched? Ah me, if some man of ye would but stay me!' ¶ Dame, saith Clarien, 'be not so full of worde. Messengers are we from the paynim Balsigant; he will save Marsilie, he saith, and sends him his glove & staff. In the Ebro he hath four thousand shallops, boats, and barges, and swift galleys; and dromonds he hath without number. The Admiral is strong and mighty, he will go into France to seek out Charles, and doubts not either to slay him or make him yield him.' 'No need to go so far,' quoth Bramimonde, 'night at hand will you find the Franks. The Emperor hath been seven full years in this land; he is a valiant and great warrior, rather would he die than fly the field; no King under heaven is there whom he doth not hold as a chid. Charles fears no man living.' ¶ 'Nay, let be,' saith King Marsilie, & he turns to the messengers: 'Speak ye to me, lords. Ye see that I am hurt to death; and I have neither son nor daughter nor heir,—one I had who was slain yesterday at eventide. Say ye to my liege lord that he come hither to me. He has rights upon this land of Spain, & I will give it over to him, if he would have it so; then let him defend it against the Franks. Concerning Charles I will give him good counsel, & mayhap by this day month he will have conquered him. Take to him the keys of Saragossa, & bid him go not far from hence, & if he will take my counsel.' 'Lord, thou speakest well & truly,' they make answer. ¶ Quoth Marsilie: 'Charles the Emperor hath slain my men, and laid waste my land, sacked & despoiled my cities; and now his men are assembled on the banks of the Ebro, not more than seven leagues from here, as I deem it. Tell the Admiral to bring up his hosts and do him battle, so charge him from me.' Then Marsilie gave over to them the keys of Saragossa; and both messengers bow before him, & take their leave & go thence. ¶ The two messengers have mounted their horses, swiftly they ride forth from the city, & come to the Admiral, sore troubled; and they give over to him the keys of Saragossa. 'What news have ye?' saith Balsigant. 'Where is Marsilie whom I summoned?' 'He is hurt unto death,' Clarien maketh answer. Yesterday Charles set forth through the passes, for he thought to return again to fair France. For his honour he set behind him a rearguard, and with it staid Count Roland, his nephew, and Oliver, and

Bramimonde maketh lament

all the Twelve Peers, together with twenty thousand armed knights of France. King Marsilie did them battle like a true baron, and in the field he and Roland fought together man to man, & Roland gave him so mighty a blow with Durandal that his right hand was smitten from off his body; & his son whom he so loved was slain, and likewise the barons he had in his company. He fled, for he could no longer make stand, and the Emperor pursued him full hotly. The King bids you come to his succour, & gives over into your hands the kingdom of Spain.' And Balsigant falls a-thinking; so great dole he has thereof that he weepeth goes out of his senses. ¶ 'Mylsred Amiral,' then saith Clarien, 'yesterday a battle was fought at Roncevals. Dead are Roland and Count Oliver, & the Twelve Peers whom Charles held so dear, together with twenty thousand of the knights of France. There King Marsilie lost his right hand, and fiercely did Charles pursue after him; and no knightes are left alive in this land, all are either slain or drowned in the Ebro. On its banks the Franks have now their camp, so near have they come to us in our marches, but if you so will it, their retreat shall be fore.' And now Balsigant is proud & stook, and is glad and joyous of heart; he rises from his great chair, and cries aloud: 'Barons, tarry not; leave the shippes, mount and ride! If Charles the Old flee not before us King Marsilie shall be revenged upon him; in return for his right hand I will bring him a head.' ¶ The paynims of Arabia have come forth from their shippes, they have mounted their horse and mules, and thereafter they rode forward,—how else should they do? When he had set them on the march, the Amiral called Bemassin, his dear friend, saying: 'Lead thou all my host, I command thee.' Then he mounted his brown war horse, and six four dukes follow him, & together they rode on till they came unto Saragossa. By the marble stairway he has lighted down from his horse, and four counts hold his stirrup. As he mounts the stair of the palace, Bramimonde runs forth to meet him, & saith: 'Alas, fair Sir, I have lost my lord; the nephew of Charles hath vanquished and slain him.' She falls at the feet of the Amiral, but he raiseth her up, & sorrowfully they went up into the chamber. ¶ When King Marsilie saw Balsigant he called to him two Saracens of Spain, saying: 'Put your arms about me that I may sit up.' Then he took one of his gloves in his left hand, and said: 'My lord and Amiral, I hereby give over all my land unto you, both Saragossa & all its dependencies. I have lost both my life and my folk.' And the Amiral answered him: 'For this am I right sorry. But I may not now hold more speech with thee, for full well I know Charles will not stay for us; yet none the less I will accept thy glove of thee.' And for pity he weeps as he turns away. Then he hastens down the stair of the palace, mounteth his horse & spurreth back to his own folk. So fast he rode that he outstrips the foremost; and ever and again he cries aloud: 'Haste ye, paynims, for even now the

The Romant generis uiding

The paynims ride to meet
Charles

Franks flee before us.' ¶ In the morning, when the first dawn brightens, Charles the Emperor awakes. Saint Gabriel, who by God's command has guarded him, stretches out his hand and makes the sign of the cross upon him. The King has risen, & laid aside his armour, and all the men of the host likewise disarm themselves. Then they mount, and ride right speedily by long paths and wide ways, for they go to see the dread carnage at Roncevals where was the battle. ¶ Charles is come into Roncevals. He begins to weep because of the dead he finds there, & he saith to the Franke: 'Barons, ride softly, for I would go on before, to seek my nephew, whom I myself would find. Once at Aix, at the feast of Christmas, when my good knightes were boasting of great battles and of fierce onsets, I heard Roland speak his mind, saying, that if he should hap to die in a strange land, it would be at the head of his men and his peers, and his face would be turned to the lands of his foes, and he would die as a conqueror, the baron.' And farther than a man may throw a staff, before all the rest Charles rides on up the mountain. ¶ As the Emperor went seeking his nephew, he found the graft and the flowers of the field bright red with the blood of his barons. Great pity he has thereof, & he may not help but weep. He has come up the hill to the two trees, full well he knew Roland's blows on the three stairs, and he sees his nephew lying stretched on the green grass. No wonder is it that Charles is full of wrath. He lighteth down from his horse, and runs to Roland and gathers him in his arms; and he swoons over him, so great is his grief. ¶ The Emperor has recovered from his swoon; and Naymes the Duke and Count Acelin, Geoffrey of Anjou, and his brother Thierri take the King and help him to sit up under a pine tree. He looks to the ground and sees his nephew lying there, and begins softly to lament him: 'Dear Roland, may God have mercy upon thee! For the arraying and winning of great battles, never haue the world seen thy like. Thy glory is near to its setting.' And Charles cannot help but swoon again. ¶ Charles the King has recovered from his swoon, four of his barons hold him in their arms; he looks to the ground and sees his nephew lying dead, still strong and gallant of seeming, but his colour is gone, and his eyes, which have turned up-wards, are darkened. Charles makes lament for him in all faith and love: 'Dear Roland, may God bring thy soul among the flowers of Paradise, amid the glorious. Woe worth the day thou comest into Spain, baron! Never shall the day dawn whereon I shall not grieve for thee. Now my pride and my power will pass; for who henceforth will uphold my kingdom? In all the world I do not think to have a single friend; though I have other kindred none are valiant as thou wert.' With both his hands he plucks the hair of his head; and so great is the dole of the Franks, that of a hundred thousand men there is not one that doth not weep. ¶ 'Dear Roland, I shall go back into France, and when I am come to Lagn, to my great hall there,

strange men will come to me from many lands, and they will ask of me where is the Count, the great captain, & I shall say to them that he lies dead in Spain. Thenceforth in sorrow shall I maintain my kingdom; never shall the day dawn whereon I shall not mourn for thee. Dear Roland, brave captain, fair youth, when I am come to Aix, to my chapel there, men will come to me asking news, & I shall tell them marvellous and heavy news: "My nephew, who has conquered many lands for me, is dead." Then the Saxons will rise up against me, & the Hungarians and the Bulgarians, and many hostile people; the Romans and the Apulians, & all those of Palermo, and those of Africa and those of Calfernè; then my woes and troubles will increase; for who will lead my armies against such a host, when he is dead, who was ever one champion? Ah fair France, how art thou made desolate! So great is my sorrow that gladly wouldest I lay down my life. With both hands the King plucks his white beard and the hairs of his head. And a hundred thousand Franks fall swooning to the ground. Dear Roland, woe worth thy life days! May thy soul be brought into Paradise. He who slew thee wrought shame to sweet France. Now is my grief so great that I would not outlive those of my house, hold who lie dead for my sake. May God, the son of Mary, grant that before I am come to the paps of Lize, my soul may this day part from my body, and follow their souls, & that my body may be laid in the earth beside their bodies. And the King weeps and plucks his white beard. Now great is the wrath of Charles,' quoth Naymes the Duke. 'My lord and Emperor,' then faith Geoffrey of Anjou, 'make ye not such great dole; rather let the field be searched and our dead, whom those of Spain have slain in battle, be brought together in a common grave.' Now blow thy horn, the King makes answer. Geoffrey of Anjou has sounded his horn; & the Franks light down from their horses, so Charles hath bidden it. And all their comrades which they find dead they straightway bring to the fosse. Many a bishop and abbot is there, and monks and canons and tonsured priests, and they have absolved the dead, and blessed them in God's name. And they kindled myrrh and sweet spices, and richly they perfumed them with incense, and buried them with great honour; & then they left them—how else should they do? But the Emperor had Roland and Oliver and Archibishop Turpin laid apart from the rest, & he ordered their bodies to be opened in his presence, & had their hearts wrapped in silken cloths, & placed in caskets of white marble. Then they took the bodies of the three barons, and when they had washed them well with wine & spices, they wrapped them in hide of the deer. And the King commanded Teobalt and Bebuin, Count Hilon, & Odo the Marquis, saying: 'Carry ye them upon the march in three wains.' Richly were they covered over with silk of Galaza. And now, even as Charles would set forth, the vanguard of the paynims is upon him. From

the foremost ranks ride forth two messengers, & in the name of the Amiral proclaim the battle: 'Daunty King, flight now were cowardly. Lo, Basigant is upon thee, and great are the hosts he brings with him out of Arabia; this day we shall try thy valiance.' The King plucks at his beard, and calls to mind his grief and his great loss; proudly he looks on his men, and lifting up his voice, which is great and mighty, he calls to them, saying: 'Ye barons of France, now arm yourselves and get ye to horseback!' The Emperor is the first to take arms; speedily has he donned his hauberk and laced his helmet, & girded on Joyeuse whose light outshines the sun, & now about his neck he hangs a shield of Bironde, & takes his lance which was fashioned at Blandonne, and then he mounts Tencendur, his good horse that he won at the ford below Maronne, when he struck down and slew Malpalin of Maronne; he slackens rein, & he spurs his horse that he springs and curvets before the eyes of a hundred thousand men. And he cries upon God and the Apostle of Rome. Throughout the field the Franks light down from their horses, and more than a hundred thousand don their armours; harness they have which well becomes them, and swift horses & goodly arms. As men well skilled they spring to the saddle; if they meet with the paynim host, hardily will they do them battle. And their gonfanons sweep down to their helmets. Now when Charles sees their goodly bearing, he speaks to Jozeran of Provence, Naymes the Duke and Anteline of Maience, saying: 'In such vassals a man may well set his trust, with them at his side it were folly to make lament. If the Arabs do not repent them of the battle, Roland's death shall cost them dear.' Now may God grant it to be as thou sayest, Naymes makes answer. Then Charles calls Basel & Guineman, saying: 'Lords, I would have you be to me in the stead of Roland & Oliver; let one of you bear the sword, the other the horn of ivory, & do ye lead the host, taking with you fifteen thousand Franks, young men and of our most valiant. After these shall be as many more whom Bebuin & Lorent shall lead.' Naymes the Duke & Count Jozeran array these battles; if they come upon the paynims, great will be the slaughter. These first divisions are of men of France, but after these two a third is arrayed of the vassals of Bavaria, their knights they reckon at twenty thousand, & never will battle be shunned by them; there is no folk in all the world whom Charles holds more dear, save those of France who have conquered the kingdoms of the earth. Count Ogier the Dane, the great warrior, will lead them, for they are a dauntless fellowship. This Charles has already three companies. Then Naymes the Duke establishes a fourth of eight valiant barons; Germans are they, the bravest of their folk, & they are reckoned at twenty thousand; well provided are they with horses & arms; never for fear of death would they flee the battle. Their leader is Herman Duke of Thrace; rather would he die than do cowardly. Naymes the Duke

The Franks make them ready for battle

The arraying of the ten battles

and Count Jozeran ha[ve] made up the fifth division of Normans; they number twenty thousand, so say the Franks; goodly are their arms & swift their horses; never for fear o[ne] death will they prove recreant; there is no folk under heaven more valiant in battle. Richard the Old will lead them to the field, & there will he deal good blows with his sharp spear. ¶ The sixth battle is of Bretons, & forty thousand knights they number; straight are their lances & well fixed their gonfanons. Otto is their over lord, & he commands Count Nivelon, Teobalt of Rheims & Odo the Marquis, saying: 'Lead ye my folk, I give them into your hands.' ¶ Thus the Emperor has six battles arrayed. Thereafter Naymes the Duke establishes the seventh of Poitevins and barons of Auvergne; they number upon forty thousand knights, good are their horses & fair their arms. They stand apart, in a valley, under a hillock, and Charles stretches out his right hand to them and blesses them. Their leaders are Jozeran and Godselme. ¶ And now Naymes establishes the eighth battle of Sternings & barons of Friesland; more than forty thousand knights they number, and never will they flee the field. 'Well will they serve me,' saith the King; 'Reinbold and Hamon de Balice shall lead them in all knightliness.' ¶ Together Naymes & Count Jozeran array the ninth battle of brave warriors, men of Lorraine and Burgundy, knights to the number of fifty thousand; they have laced on their helmets & donned their byrnies, stout are their lances & short of shaft. If the Arabs hold not back from the encounter, these men will give them good blows; and Thierry the Duke of Argonne will lead them. ¶ The tenth battle is of barons of France, a hundred thousand of four noblest knights, hardy of body and proud of bearing, hoary of head and white of beard, clad in hauberks and two-fold byrnies, girt with swords of France or Swaine, & bearing shields with divers de vices. They mount their horses and clamour for battle, crying out Monjoie. With them is Charles. Geoffrey of Anjou bears the oriflamme. Saint Peter's ensign it was, & thence had been called Romaine, but this day its name was changed to Monjoie. ¶ The Emperor lights down from his horse, & throws himself upon the green grass, he turns his face to the rising sun and calls upon God with all his soul: 'O our true Father, defend me this day, thou who saved Jonah from the whale in whose belly he was, and spared the King of Nineveh, and rescued Daniel from the dread torment of the lions' den, and preserved the three children in the fiery furnace. Let thy love be within me this day, & grant me in thy mercy, if it be thy will, that I may revenge Roland my nephew. And when he had prayed, he rose up, & upon his forehead made the sign which has so great power. Then the King mounts his swift horse,—Naymes and Jozeran held his stirrup for him,—he takes his shield & sharp lance. He is full noble of person, comely and strong, clear of face & goodly of bearing. Then he rides forward right firmly. In rear and van the

The Franks are faire of counte

trumpets are sounded, & clear above all the rest rises the note of the ivory horn; & the Franks weep in pity for Roland. ¶ The Emperor rides forward right nobly; he has spread out his beard over his hauberk, and for love of him the rest have done likewise, and thereby the hundred thousand Franks are known to all. They pass rocky cliffs and heights, deep valleys and dread desiles, and at last come beyond the passes & the wastelands, into the marches of Spain, there on a space of level ground, they make halt. Meantime Balsigant's advance guard returns to him, and a Spearian among them tells his message: 'We have seen Charles the haughty King, proud are his men, no mind have they to fail him. Arm yourselves, anon we shall have battle.' Then saith Balsigant: 'We bring braver tidings. Sound your trumpets, that the paynims may know thereof.' ¶ Throughout all the host taboris are sounded, bussynes and clear tempests. The paynims dismount & arm themselves. The Amiral wond[er] not delay; he dons his hauberk, the skirt whereof is braided & fringed, laces on his helmet adorned with gold; then he girds his sword at his left side, in his pride he has found a name for it, because of the sword of Charles whereof he has heard, and his he now calls Precieuse; & he has made it his war-cry in the field, and has bidden his knights to cry it. And about his neck he hangs his shield which is wide and great, the base thereof is gold and the border of precious stones, and its guige is of goodly patterned silk. He grasps his lance which he calls Walter, its shaft was as thick and great as a club, and the iron point thereof was as much as a mule might carry. Marcuse from over sea holds the stirrup as Balsigant mounts his charger. Wide is the fork of the baron's legs, thin his flanks and great his sides; deep of chest he is, and well made of body, broad are his shoulders, and clear is his forehead, proud is his look & his hair right curly; & white he is as is the flower in summer time. Many a time has his prowess been proved. God, he were a goodly vassal, and he had but Christianity. He spurs his horse that the bright blood flows out, he makes him spring a curvet, & leaps a ditch which measures a good fifty feet. And the paynims cry: 'Well he will defend our marches. The Frank who encounters with him, will he, nill he, must take his end. Charles is mad in that he has not fled.' ¶ The Amiral looks a goodly baron; white is his beard even as is the flower. And wise he is according to his law, and in battle he is fierce and mighty. His son Malpramis is full knightly, tall he is & strong and like to the men of his line. He saith to his father: 'Lord, let us ride forward! much I doubt me if we see aught of Charles.' Yea, for he is a man of prowess, Balsigant makes answer. 'Great honour is done him in many a story; but now that he is bereft of Roland, his nephew, he will not have the might to withstand us.' ¶ Malpramis, fair son, saith Balsigant again, 'yesterday was slain Roland the good knight, & Oliver the wife, the valiant, and the Twelve Peers whom Charles held so dear,

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and with them twenty thousand warriors of France. Those that are left I rate at less than my glove. Yet sooth it is that the Emperor has returned hither again, so the Syrian messenger tells me, and that he has arrayed ten great battles. Right valiant is he who sounds the horn of ivory; with a clear trumpet his comrade answers him again, and together they ride at the head of the host; & with them are fifteen thousand Franks, young warriors whom Charles calls his children. And after these come as many more, & they will lay on right fiercely.' Then saith Malpramis: 'Lord, let the first blow be mine.' Malpramis, fair son, answers Basigant; 'I grant thee thy boon. Go, and sail anon upon the Franks, and take with thee Corleu the King of Persia, & Dapamort the King of Leutis. If thou canst mate the great pride of the Franks I will give thee a part of my kingdom from Cheriant even to Val Marchis.' 'Lord, I thank thee,' Malpramis made answer, and stood forth to receive the gift,—the land it was which aforetime King Florit held—but never from that day was Malpramis to see it, never was he to be vested therein & installed. And now the Admiral rides through the host, and his son, who is tall of stature, follows him with the two Kings, Corleu & Dapamort. Quickly they array thirty great companies, and so great is the multitude of his knights that the least of these numbers thirty thousand men. The first is arrayed of men of Botentrot, & the second of Milciani,—they have huge heads, and along the spine of their backs grow bristles like those of a wild boar. The third is of Bos and of Nubians; the fourth of Slavs and Russians; the fifth is of the Sorbi; the sixth of Moors & Armenians; the seventh of men of Jericho; the eighth of Blacks and the ninth of Bros; and the tenth is made up of men of Valde la Forte, a folk that loves evil. Then the Admiral swears a great oath by the might & the body of Gahound: 'Had is Charles of France to ride forward; a battle there will be, if he doth not give back; & nevermore shall he wear golden crown on head.' Thereafter they array another ten battles; the first is of the men of Canelieu,—they have come across from Val Fuit, & full hideous are they to look upon; the second is of Turks; and of Persians the third; the fourth is made up of fierce Pincenati; the fifth of Solstras and Avars; and the sixth of Ormaliens and Logisci; the seventh is arrayed of the people of Samuels; the eighth is of the men of Prussia; the ninth of Slavs, and the tenth of warriors of the desert of Occiant,—a folk they are who do no service to the Lord God, never shall you hear of men more evil; & their skins are hard like iron, wherefore they have no need of hauberks or helmets; and in battle they are fell & cruel. Now the Admiral arrays another ten battles. The first is of the Giants of Malpruse; the second of Huns, and the third of Hungarians; in the fourth ride the folk of Valde la Longue, & in the fifth those of the Dread Valley; the sixth is made up of men of Joi & Marnse; the seventh of Lechs

& Astrimunies; the eighth is of warriors of Arguisse; the ninth of those of Clarbonne; and in the tenth ride the bearded folk of Val Fronde,—they are a people who have no love of God. So in the chronicles of France are named the thirty columns. Great are the hosts, and many a trumpet is sounded. The paynims ride on like goodly warriors. Great and mighty is the Admiral; before him he sets bear the Dragon, and the standard of Tervagant and Mabound, & an image of Apollo on the felon. Enclosing these ride ten men of Canelieu, and with a loud voice they cry: 'Let those who would have the protection of our gods pray to them and serve them in all contrition!' And the paynims bow their heads, and bend full low their bright helmets. But the Franks cry: 'Now die, ye swine! May ye be brought to confusion this day. And thou, our God, be Charles's shield, and let the battle be adjudged in his name.' Crafty and wise is the Admiral; he calls his son and the two Kings, saying: 'Barons ride on before, & lead all my host; but three companies, & of the best, I keep with me, that of the Turks, & that of the Ormaliens, & for the third, the Giants of Malpruse. And the men of Occiant shall abide with me, & they shall set upon Charles and his Franks. If the Emperor will do battle with me his head shall be severed from his body, let him be assured thereof, for such is his deserving.' Great are the two hosts & goodly the columns. Between them is neither hill nor height nor valley, neither holt nor forest, no hiding can there be, for each is clear to other in the open plain. Then saith Basigant: 'Ride on, my paynims, & seek the battle!' Ambroise d'Oliferne bears the standard; and the paynims lift up their voices, & cry aloud 'Precieuse!' But the Franks make answer: 'This day shall ye be given over to destruction!' And again & again they raise the cry of Monjoie. The Emperor bids his trumpets be sounded, & clear above them all rings out the horn of ivory. Goodly is Charles's host, say the paynims; 'great & sore will be the battle.' Dast is the plain and wide the fields. There is great shining of helmets adorned with gold, of shields and broderied hauberks, of lances and gonions. Trumpets blow, right clear are their blasts, and high is the swell of the ivory horn. The Admiral calls to his brother, Canabeu, the King of Floredée, who held all the land even to Val Sevree, & showed him the ten companies of Charles: 'See the glory of France, the far famed; proudly rides the Emperor, he is behind among the bearded folk; they have spread out their beards over their hauberks, white they are as is snow on ice. These men will deal good blows with lance and sword, great and terrible will be the battle, such a one as was never before seen of men.' Then farther than a man can throw a peeled wand, Basigant rode on before his army, and bespake them, saying: 'Follow, O paynims, for I lead the way.' And he hath shaken the shaft of his lance, and turned its point towards Charles. When Charles the Great saw the Admiral, his Dragon & ensign and standard,

Goodly are the two hosts

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¶ the great host of the Arabs, ho w that they co vered
all the plain save that part which the Emperor him-
self held, he cried out with a loud voice: 'Barons of
France, good vassals are ye, & many are the battleys ye
have fought in the field; see now the paynims before
you, felons they are & cowards, & their faith availeth
them not whith; so though their number be great, what
care ye, lordes? Let him who would saij ride forward,
follow me.' Then he spurred his horse, and Tene-
dure sprang four times into the air. And the Franks
say: 'Valiant is our king, Ride on, lord, not one of us
shall fail you.' ¶ Fair was the
day & bright the sun; goodly the
hosts and mighty the columns.
And now the foremost ranks
join battle. Count Rabel and
Count Guineiman slacken rein,
and spur on their swift horses.

The two hosts join battle.

¶ And as the Franks drive for-
ward, and fall a smiting with
their sharp spears. ¶ Count
Rabel is a knight of good har-
diness, he pricks on his horse
with his spurs of fine gold &
rides on Torren the Persian
King; neither shielde nor hauberk can withstand the
blow, and he thrust his golden lance into the King's
body, & hurst him dead among the brambles. There-
at the Franks cry: 'May the Lord God aidus! Charles
has the right, & we must not fail him.' ¶ And Guine-
man sets upon the King of Leuitis and shatters his
targe adorned with flowers, & thereafter rent asunder
his byrnie, and drove all his gonfanon into his body
that he fell dead, let who so will laugh or weep there-
for. At this buffet the Franks cry: 'Cry on, barons,
hold not back! Charles has the right against the pay-
nim folk; and the true judgment of God is with us.' ¶ Mal-
pramie, on his white charger, drives into the
press of the Franks, ever & again striking great blows,
that oftentimes he hurls one dead upon another. Vali-
gant speaks first, saying: 'Barons, ye whom I have
so long nourished, see now my son who goes seeking
Charles, and challenging many a baron to the com-
bat; a better vassal I could not wish for. To his res-
cue now with your lances!' At his wordes the pay-
nims haste forward, dealing fierce blows, that great
is the slaughter. Wondrous hard is the battle; never
before or after was one so great. ¶ Loost are the hosts
and noble the columnes; & now all the companies are
at battle. The paynims lay on that it is wonder to see.
God! but the shaft of many a lance is broken, and
shieldes are shattered, and hauberks unmailed. Thick
lie the maimed and the dead; so, the ground is so en-
cumbered with them that the fair grass of the fields
which had been green, is now all redened with blood.
Yet again the Admiral calls to his followers, saying:
'Smite, smite the Christian folk, ye barons.' Hore &

Never was battle so great.



dread is the battle, that never before or after was one
so fierce & so great. Death alone will end it. ¶ The
Admiral calls to his folk: 'Smite, O paynims, for that
and naught else have ye come. I will give you women
fair and comely, & fiefs and honours and lands.' And
the paynims make answer: 'Yea, it behooves us so to
do.' And so fierce are their blows they may not recover
their lances, & more than a hundred thousand swords
are drawn. Great and dolorous is the slaughter;
what a battle saw the men who were there. ¶ The
Emperor calls to his Franks, saying: 'Lords & bar-
ons, ye are full dear to me, & in
you I set my trust; many a bat-
tle have you won for me, & con-
quered many lands, & many a
king destroned. Well I know
the guerdon I owe you with my
lands & my gold and my body.'

Revenge now your brothers
and sons & heirs who yester-
day were slain at Roncerovas.
Well ye know the right is mine
against these paynims. And the
Franks make answer: 'Lord,
thou sayest truly.' Twenty thou-
sand men Charles has with him, and with one voice
they pledge him their faith that they will not fail him
for torment or death. There is not one among them
but lays on with his lance, & fiercely they smite with
their swords. Wondrous hard is the battle. ¶ Mal-
pramie, the baron, rides through the press doing great
slaughter to those of France. But now Naymes the
Duke looks hanghtily upon him, and encounters with
him like a man of good hardiness, rends the leather
of his shielde, hews off two cantles of his broidered
hauberk, & drives his yellow gonfanon into his body, &
hurts him dead to ground among seven hundred of his
comrades. ¶ King Canaber, the Admiral's brother,
spurs on his horse, & draws his sword, the hilt where-
of is set with precious stones, and smites Naymes
on his princely helmet, cleaves it in two halves, and
with his steel blade cuts through five of its latches;
his steel cap naught availeth the Duke, his coif is cut
through even to the flesh, and a piece of it falls to the
ground. Mighty was the blow, & so astonyed therby
is the Duke that he had straightway fallen, & if God
had not aided him; he clutched the neck of his horse,
and if the paynim had dealt him another blow, the
noble vassal had been slain straightway. But now
Charles of France comes to his succour. ¶ Naymes
the Duke is in sore torment, and hastily the paynim
makes him ready to strike again. But Charles cries
to him: 'Coward, thy stroke shall cost thee dear!' And
right valiant he deals him a buffet, shatters his shielde
and breaks it upon his heart, rends asunder the ven-
tail of his hauberk, and hurst him down dead; and his
saddle gors empty. ¶ Great is the sorrow of Charles

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the King when he sees Duke Maymes wounded before him, & the bright blood flowing out on the green grass. The Emperor saith to him, speaking low: 'Fair Sir Maymes, now ride with me. Dead is the felon who brought thee to this strait; once only I set my lance in his body.' And the Duke makes answer: 'Lord, I believe thee; if I live great honour shall be thine there-by.' Then lovingly and loyally they joined company. With them are twenty thousand Franks, and there is not one among them but deals good blows & fights hardily. ¶ The Admiral rides through the press and thrusts upon Count Guineeman, breakes his white shielde above his heart, rends the sides of his hauberk, and hews off two of his ribs, that he falls dead from his swift horse. Thereafter the Admiral flew Bebuin, & Corant, and Richard the Old, the liege lord of the Normans; & the paynims cry: 'Doughty is Precieuse! Lay on, barons, we have good surety.' ¶ Would ye might see the knights of Arabia, and those of Occiant and Arguille and Basile! Well they smite with their lances, dealing stout blows; yet the Franks have no mind to give back, and on both sides many a man is slain. Until evening full sore is the battle; great is the slaughter among the barons of France, and yet more woe will there be or ever the two hosts are disparted. ¶ Both Franks and Arabs dealt great blows that shafts and bright lances are shivered. He who saw so many a shielde dishonoured, and heard the ring of the white hanberks, & the clash of shielde on helm, and saw so many brave knights go down, and heard men cry out as they lay dying upon the ground, must call to mind dolour sore and great. That battle was hard to endure. The Admiral calls upon Apolston, Ter-vagant and Mahound: 'My lordes and goddes, well have I served you; and I will make you images of fine gold and ye will succour me against Charles.' But now Bernaffin, one of those he holdes dear, comes before him with ill tidings, saying: 'Balsigant, lord, misfortune hath come upon you this day; you have lost Malpramis your son, and Canabeu your brother is slain. The victory fell to two of the Franks; of the twain one is the Emperor, methinks, large is he of limb, and looks a mighty lord, and his beard is white as is the flower in April.' At the newe the Admiral bowed his head, and thereafter hid his face; so great was his grief he thought to die straightway. And he called to him Janglen of over-sea. ¶ 'Come hither, Janglen,' saith the Admiral, 'thou art valiant & wise; many a time have I followed thy counsel. What sayest thou now of the Franks and the Arabs, will the victory be with us?' And Janglen makes answer: 'Thou art doomed, Balsigant. Thy gods will not save thee. Charles is proud, & his men valiant; never have I seen so warlike a host. But call ye in the barons of Occiant, the Turks and Enfreuns, Arabs & Giants. Do what it behooves you to do & delay not.' ¶ The Admiral has spread out his beard over his hauberk, white it is as is flower on thorn. Come what may he will not flinch from it. He puts a clear trumpet to his

lips, & clearly he sounds it that all the paynims hear it, and throughout the field his followers rally. The men of Occiant Bray out & neigh, and the men of Ar-guille yelp like dogs, and they fall upon the Franks with such fury that the stoutest ranks break and give way, and seven thousand fall dead at the one onset. ¶ Count Ogier knew not cowardice, a better warrior never donned hauberk. When he saw the Frankish companies give way, he called Thierry the Duke of Argonne, Geoffrey of Anjou, & Jozeran the Count, & bespake Charles right proudly: 'See now the paynims, how they slay your men! May it please God that ye never more wear crown, and ye fight not hardily to revenge your shame.' No man spake any word in answer, but they spur on, giving their horses free rein, & smiting the paynims wheresoever they meet them. ¶ Charles the King deals great blows, so likewise do Maymes the Duke, Ogier the Dane, & Geoffrey of Anjou, he who bore the King's standard. Ogier the Dane is full valiant, he pricks on his horse to a gallop, & smites him who holds the Dragon so fiercely that he bears down both the Dragon and the King's ensign. Balsigant sees his gonfanon fall & the ensign of Mahound left unguarded, & begins to know that he is in the wrong & the right is with Charles. And the paynims of Arabia begin to weary. The Emperor calls to his Franks: 'Tell me now, barons, in God's name, will you aid me?' 'Thon dost ill to ask it,' the Franks make answer: 'Base would he be who did not strike hardily.' ¶ The day passes & turns towards evening. The Franks and paynims lay on with their swords. They who arrayed these two hosts were mighty men of battle; and still neither side forgets its war-cry, the Admiral calls aloud Precieuse, & Charles the famous cry of Monjoie. Each knows other by his strong voice and clear, and amid the press they met & hurtled together, each dealing great blows with his lance upon the patterned shielde of the other, till they break them below the broad bosses; & they rent apart one another's hanberk, but they did not come at the flesh. Their girths are broken, their saddles thrown back that the two Kings are brought to ground, but swiftly they sprang to their feet, and valiantly they have drawn their swords. This combat cannot be stayed, nor ended save by one man's death. ¶ Dastant is Charles of fair France, yet the Admiral is neither adread nor dismayed. Both have their bare swords in hand, & each deals other great blows on his shielde; they cut through the leather and two-fold wood that the nails fall out and the bosses are shattered, then without let or hindrance they strike on their hanberks, and the light springs out from their bright helmets. This combat cannot be staid till one or other cries him in the wrong. ¶ 'Bethink thyself, Charles,' saith the Admiral, 'take counsel and repent thee of thy wrong towards me. Thon hast, as I know, slain my son, and wrongfully dost thou claim my land of me; become my man and I will grant it to thee in fee, come and serve me both here & in the East.' But Charles makes an-

The paynims begin to weary

Precieuse and Monjoie

XXXII

swer: 'That, methinks, were great villainy; I may give neither peace nor love to a paynim. Receive the law which God has made manifest to us, accept Christianity and I will love thee straightway; then believe in the King that wield's the world and serve him.' Nay,' saith Balsigant, 'I like not thy sermon.' Then they set to again with the swords with which they are girded. Strong and mighty is the Admiral, he smites Charles upon the helmet of brown steel, breaks and shatters it upon his head, and with his sword carves through the thick hair, and hews off a payn'm's breadth and more of the flesh, that the bone is left bare. Charles reels and is nigh to falling, but it is not God's will that he be either slain or vanquished; Saint Gabriel hath come to him again, and speaks to him, saying: 'What wouldest thou do, great King?' When Charles heard the blessed voice of the angel he lost all fear and dread of death, and his wit and his strength returned to him. He smites the Admiral with the sword of France, shatters the helmet which shines with precious stones, carves through the skull that the brain runs out, and through all the face even to the white beard, that the Admiral falls dead beyond all help. And Charles, that he be heard of all, cries out Monjoie. At his call Duke Maynes comes to him, seizes Tencendur, and helps the King to mount him. The paynims flee; it is not God's will that they abide; and now the prayer of the Franks is granted. The paynims flee, so the Lord God wills it, and Franks & Emperor pursue after them. Saith the King: 'Lords, revenge now your woe. Ease your hearts and your longing, for this morning I saw you weep.' And the Franks make answer: 'Sire, even so will we do.' And every man strikes as many good blows as he may, that few of the paynims escape. Great is the heat and the dust rises thick; the paynims flee and the Franks press them hard, that the chase lasts even to Saragossa. Bramonde has mounted her to war; with her are clerks and canons of the false faith never loved of God, unordained they are, & their heads are untonured. When the Queen saw the rout of the Arabes she cried aloud: 'Help us, O Mahound! Ah, gentle King, now are our men vanquished, & the Admiral shamefully slain!' When Marfile heard, he turned him to the wall, and weeping, hid his face. Even so he dies of sorrow; & as he was burdened with sin, eager devils seize upon his soul. The paynims are slain save some few who flee, & Charles hath won the battle. He has beaten down the gate of Saragossa, well he knows it is no longer defended. He has taken the city and enters therein with his army, and in triumph they lie there that night. Mighty is the King of the hoary beard, and Bramonde has given over to him the towers, whereof ten are great, and fifty of less size. Well he labours whom the Lord God aids. The day passes & night darkens, clear is the moon and bright the stars. The Emperor hath taken Saragossa. He commands a thousand Franks that they search the city, the synagogues

and the mosques; with axes and mallets of iron they shatter the walls and the idols, till naught is left of their sorcery & their lies. The King believes in God and would do his service; and now the bishops bless the waters, and the paynims are brought to baptism. And if any among them gainsay Charles, he must hang or burn or perish by the sword. More than a hundred thousand are baptized and become true Christians, at save only the Queen; she will be brought a captive to fair France, & it is by love the King would have her converted. The night passes and the clear day dawns. Charles has staffed the towers of Saragossa with troops, leaving there a thousand stout knights, who keep the city for the weak of the Emperor. The King gets to horse with all his men, & Bramonde whom he takes with him as a captive; naught but good would he do her. And now in all joy and mirth they turn homewards; in their strength & their might they pass Narbonne, and came to the prond city of Bordeaux; and there Charles left the horn of ivory filled with gold & mangons upon the altar of Saint Severin the baron, where it may still be seen of pilgrims. Thereafter Charles crossed the Gironde on great ships which he had there, & unto Blaye he bore his nephew, and Oliver, Roland's gentle comrade, and the Archibishop who was both wise and brave; he has the three lords laid in tombs of white marble, in Saint Romain, and there the barons lie even unto this day. The Franks commend them to God and his angels, & Charles rides on over hill and dale; he will make no stay until he comes to Aix, but hastens on till he reaches the entrance stair. And when he is come into his high palace, by messenger he summone his judges, Bavarians and Savons, men of Lorraine & Friesland, Germans and Burgundians, Poitevins, Normans & Bretons, & the wisest of those of France. And then begins the trial of Banelon. The Emperor has returned from Spain, & come again to Aix, the fairest seat in France; he has gone up into his palace & has passed into the hall. To him comes Aude, that fair damsel, & saith to the King: 'Where is Roland, the captain, who pledged him to take me as his wife?' Thereat Charles is filled with dolour & grief, he weeps and plucks his white beard, saying: 'Sister, sweet friend, thou ashonest me o' one who is dead. But I will make good thy loss to thee, and will give thee Louis—a better I cannot name—my son he is, and will hold my marches.' Lord, thy words are strange to me,' Aude makes answer. 'May it not please God or his saints or his angels that after Roland's death I shold yet live.' She loses her colour and falls at the feet of Charles, & so, she is dead. God have mercy upon her soul. The barons of France weep & lament her. Aude the Fair has gone to her end. But the King thinks her in a swoon, he is full of pity for her, and he weeps; he takes her by the hands & raises her up, but her head falls back upon her shoulders. When Charles sees that she is dead, he straightway calls four countesses; Aude is borne to a convent of nuns

XXXIII

hard by, and they watch by her the night through till dawn. Richly & fairly they bury her beside an altar, & the King does her great honour. ¶ The Emperor is come again to Aix. And Banelon the felon, in chains of iron, is in the city, before the palace; for vnginen bound him to a stake, and made fast his hands with strips of deer's hide; well they beat him with staves and leatheren thongs, for he hath deserved no other bouny. Thus in sore torment he awaits his trial. ¶ It is written in the ancient Beste that Charles did summon men from many lands, and assemble them in the chapel at Aix. Proud is the day and high the festival, that of Saint Silvestre the baron, some men say. And now begins the trial, and ye shall hear of Banelon who did the treason. The Emperor has commanded that he be brought before him. ¶ 'Lords and barons,' then saith Charles the King, 'now judge me the right concerning Banelon. He went among my host into Spain with me, & he restime of twenty thousand of my Franks, & of my nephew whom ye shall see no more, & of Oliver, the courteous, the valiant; & the True're Peers likewise he betrayed for money.' Then quoth Banelon: 'I were a felon shold I deny it. Roland spoilt me of money and goods, for this I fought his death & his torment. But that it was treason I deny.' 'Now let us take counsel,' say the Franks in answer. ¶ So Banelon stood before the King; he is strong of body & his face is fresh of hue, if he were true-hearted he were a goodly baron. He looks on the men of France, and all the judges, and on his own kin, thirty of whom are with him, and he cries with a loud voice: 'For the love of God now hear me, ye barons! Ye, I was in the host with the Emperor, and I did him service in all faith & love. Then Roland, his nephew, conceived a hatred against me, and condemned me to do sour and death. Messenger I was to King Marsilie, & if I returned unshurt it was by mine own wit. And I defied Roland the chie stain, and Oliver, and all their comrades, and this was heard of Charles and his valiant barons. Revenged me I have, but in that is no treason.' Let us go into council, the Franks make answer. ¶ Now that Banelon sees his high trial is opened, he calls about him thirty of his kinsmen. One there is among them to whom all the rest give ear, and he is Pinabel of the castle of Sorence. Ready of speech he is, and he can plead full well, and if it be a question of arms he is a goodly warrior. Then saith Banelon: 'In you I set my trust; save me now from calunny & death.' 'Thou shalt be saved, and that speedily,' saith Pinabel. If any frank condemn thee to hang I will give him the lie with the point of my sword where so ever the Emperor shall summon us to do battle man to man.' And Banelon the Count throws himself at his kinsman's feet. ¶ Bavarians and Saxones have gone into council, Poitevins & Normans & Franks, and with them is many a Bernan and Tenton. The men of Auvergne were the most inclined to grace, & the most friendly towards Pinabel. They said one to another: 'Well let be. Let us leave the trial, and pray

the King that he pardon Banelon for this time, if he will henceforth serve him in all faith and love. Dead is Roland, ye shall see him no more, nor can ye bring him back with gold or goods; folly it were to hold trial by combat.' And there was none who did not agree to this and yea say it, save only Thierry, the brother of Lord Geoffrey. ¶ The barons return to Charles, and say to the King: 'Lord, we beseech you that you pardon Count Banelon, and henceforth he will serve you in all faith and love. Let him live, for he is of gentle birth. Roland is dead, never shall ye see him more, nor will any price restore him to you.' 'Faithless ye are to me,' saith the King in answer. ¶ When Charles sees that they have all failed him, his face and his countenance darken, and 'Woe is me!' he cried in his grief. But before him is a good knight, Thierry, brother to the Angevin Duke, Geoffrey. ¶ Can he be of body nimble and slender; black-haired, and brown of face he is, not tall, & yet not overshort. Courteously he speaks to the Emperor: 'Fair Sir King, make not such sorrow; thou knowest that I have served thee well, and by my lineage I have a right to a share in this trial. Howsoe'er Roland may have wronged Banelon thy service shold have been his protection; Banelon is a felon in that he betrayed him, for there by he has broken his oath to thee and transgressed. And for this I condemn him to hanging and death, & that his body be cast out to the dogs, even as that of a traitor who hath done treason. If he hath any kinsman who will give me the lie, I will uphold my judgment by the sword I have gilded here at my side.' 'That is well said,' the Franks make answer. ¶ Then came Pinabel before the King; talk he is, & strong & hardy and swift, shott is the term of the man who gets a stroke at his hands. And he saith to the King: 'Lord, thine is the quarrel; I pray thee put an end to this complaint. Lo, Thierry has pronounced his judgment, I give him the lie and would do him battle.' And he gives him his right glove made of skin of the deer. Saith the Emperor: 'I must have good hostages.' Thereupon the thirty kinsmen of Banelon offer themselves as surety. Then saith the King: 'I likewise will give thee pledges; & let these be guarded till the right be made manifest.' ¶ When Thierry saw that the battle was toward, he gave Charles his right glove; and the Emperor on his part gave hostages. Then he commanded that four benches be brought into the great square, & thereon they who were to do battle took their places. By the rest the combat was pronounced lawful; and Ogier of Denmark declared the terms. Then the combatants call for their horses & arms. ¶ In that they are near to battle they confess their sins, & are shriven and blessed; they hear mass and receive the communion, & rich offerings they make to the churches. Then the twain come again before Charles. They have fastened on their spurs, and donned their shining hauberkis which are both strong & light, made fast upon their heads their bright helmets, & girt on their swords hilted with pure gold, hung their quartered shields

Thierry condemns Banelon

The trial by combat.

about their necks, and now in their right hands they grip their sharp spears, & mount their swift coursers. Thereupon a hundred thousand knights fell a weeping, for they had pity upon Thierry for Roland's sake. But God knows what the end will be. Below Aix is a wide meadow, & there the two barons are to do battle. They are men of good prowess & valour, & their horses are swift and keen. The two knights slacken rein, & spurring hard, ride each at other with all the might they have, that their shields are clest and shattered, their hauberks rent, & thereto their girhou are broken that their saddles turn and fall to earth. And the hundred thousand men who watch them weep. Both knights are on the ground, but lightly they spring to their feet. Pinabel is strong & swift & nimble; each run upon other, for both now are unarmed, and with their swords, whereof the pommels are all of gold, they stab and hew their helmets of steel; and strong are the blows for the breaking of helms. The Frankish knights make great sorrow; and 'O God, make clear the right,' cried Charles. Then saith Pinabel: 'Now yield thee, Thierry, and I will be thy man in all love & faith, & of my havings I will give thee whatsoever thou wilst; but do thou make Banelon's peace with the King.' 'Nay, that will I not do,' quoth Thierry; 'I were very traitor and if I should agree. May God judge between thee & me this day.' Quoth Thierry: 'Pinabel, thou art a good man of thy hands, tall thou art, and strong, and well fashioned of body, and thy peers account well of thy valour; now let be this battle, and I will make thy peace with Charles, but to Banelon such justice shall be done that men shall not stint tasking of it till the world's end.' 'No, so God help me!' quoth Pinabel. 'I will hold by my kin, nor will I ever yield me to any man living, rather would I die than bring that shame upon me.' Thereupon they began again to strike great blows on their helmets studded with gold and gems, that the fire sprang out towards heaven. By no power may they now be disparted, nor may the combat be ended save by death. Right valiant is Pinabel of Sorence; he smites Thierry on his helm of Provence, that the fire sprang out therefrom & kindled the grass; he thrusts at him with the point of his sword, cleaves his helmet above his forehead, that the stroke carries to the middle of the face, & the right cheek bursts out a bleeding; his hauberk is rent down to his belly, but God so guards him that he is not slain. Thierry sees that he is wounded in the face, & the bright blood flows down upon the grass of the field; he smites Pinabel upon his helm of brown steel, rends it asunder even to the nasal that the brains run out; and he drives the blow home that Pinabel falls dead. So with this stroke the battle is won. And the Franks cry: 'God has made manifest his might. It is meet that Banelon be hung, and likewise his kinsmen, who answered for him.' When that Thierry had won the battle, Charles the Emperor came to him with four of his barons, Naymes the Duke, Ogier of Denmark, Geoffrey of

Anjou and William of Blaye. The King hath taken Thierry in his arms, & dried his face with his great cloak to smarten skin, then he throws it down & another is wrapped about him. Thereafter they full gently disarmed the knight, and mounted him upon an Arabian mule; & so he returns again joyously and nobly. They come to Aix & alight in the great square. And now begins the slaying of Banelon & his kin. Charleo calls his dukeo and his counts, saying: 'What counsel ye me concerning those I have in my prison, they who came to the trial to uphold Banelon, and gave them selves as hostages for Pinabel?' And the Franks make answer: 'It were ill done and if one were set to live.' Then the King commands one of his wardens, Basbrun, saying: 'Both thou & hang them all to yon blasted tree; by this my beard wherof the hairs are hoary, & if thou let one escape, thou shalt be given over to death and destruction.' And Basbrun answered him: 'How else shouldest I do? And by the help of a hundred serjeants he led them away by force; and they were all hung to the number of thirty. For the traitor brings death to both himself & to others.' Thereafter the Bavarians and Germans returned home again, and thereto the Poitevins & Bretons & Normans. Above all the rest the Franks agreed that Banelon should die by great torture. They let bring four chargers, & then they bind the traitor hand and foot; wild & fleet are the horses, & four sergeants urge them on towards a meadow wherein is aare. So Banelon is come to sore punishment, all his sinews are put to the rack, & all his limbs are torn out from his body, and the bright blood flows out on the green grass. Thus Banelon dies the death of a felon. It is not meet that he who betrays others should boast thereof. When that the Emperor had done vengeance, he called to him the bishops of France, together with those of Bavaria & Alemaigne, & saith to them: 'In my court is a captive, a lady of high parentage, who, having heard many sermons & examples, would believe in God, & entreat Christianity. Baptize her that God may receive her soul.' And they answer him, saying: 'Now for god's mothers let there be called noble dame of good lineage.' At the baths of Aix is a great assembly; there they baptize the Queen of Spain, and call her by the name of Julian. By full knowledge has she become a Christian. So the Emperor has done justice and appeased his great wrath; & he has brought Brammonde to Christianity. The day passes & night darkens, & as the King lies in his vaulted chamber, Saint Gabriel comes to him from God, saying: 'Charles, now call together the hosts of thy empire, and go in thy might into the land of Bire, and give succour to King Vivien at Impsh, for the pagins have laid a siege about his city, and the Christians cry out to thee and entreat thee.' Little will had the Emperor to go. 'Ah God,' he saith, 'how is my life oppressed with burdens.' And he weeps and plucks his white beard.

Here ends the geste which Turoldus tells.

¶ This English version of The Song of Roland,
translated from the Old French by Isabel Butler,
follows the text of Theodor Hüller; in a few in-
stances, however, readings have been adopted from
de Jasseville, Gaston Paris & Stengel. ¶ This edi-
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